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THE THREE PANICS:

An Historical Episode.

BY

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Years.	Expenditure of the English and French Navies, from 1835 to 1859 inclusive.		Expenditure for Wages in the English and French Dockyards during the same period.		Number of Seamen maintained in the two Navies.		Number of Vessels in Commission in the French Navy.	Years.
	English.	French.	English.	French.	English.	French.		
1835	4,245,723	2,227,709	376,377	343,032	26,041	16,628	165	1835
1836	4,533,543	2,439,445	373,996	358,664	30,195	21,685	171	1836
1837	4,788,761	2,351,949	472,870	264,508	31,289	23,812	186	1837
1838	4,811,990	2,567,092	474,943	276,752	32,028	24,500	198	1838
1839	5,197,511	2,790,921	495,489	314,593	34,857	25,457	218	1839
1840	5,824,074	3,540,058	557,053	384,197	37,665	33,107	228	1840
1841	6,805,351	4,542,495	610,007	436,368	41,389	40,171	227	1841
1842	6,818,173	4,665,617	607,008	481,656	43,105	36,416	225	1842
1843	6,382,990	3,624,929	629,441	410,761	40,229	31,345	213	1843
1844	6,250,120	3,888,121	691,184	358,271	38,343	30,240	219	1844
1845	6,943,720	3,847,498	732,625	369,772	40,084	28,979	233	1845
1846	7,803,465	4,507,427	796,147	436,243	43,314	33,970	243	1846
1847	8,013,873	5,145,900	853,574	448,333	44,969	32,169	240	1847
1848	7,922,287	4,985,872	890,626	444,085	43,978	28,760	242	1848
1849	6,942,397	3,923,276	805,507	456,155	39,535	27,063	211	1849
1850	6,437,883	3,406,866	726,956	432,837	39,093	24,679	181	1850
1851	5,849,917	3,293,737	712,372	416,773	38,957	22,316	166	1851
1852	6,625,944	3,462,271	702,260	425,811	40,451	25,016	175	1852
1853	6,640,596	3,967,838	719,214	467,898	45,885	28,513	192	1853
1854	12,182,769	7,115,417	968,608	688,418	61,457	48,812	254	1854
1855	19,014,708	8,702,758	1,172,800	830,570	67,791	54,479	322	1855
1856	16,013,995	8,330,690	1,301,077	776,356	60,659	40,882	310	1856
1857	10,390,000	5,070,304	937,773	636,776	53,919	29,289	215	1857
1858	10,029,047	5,337,060	991,592	640,954	55,883	29,602	199	1858
1859	11,072,243	8,333,933	1,582,112	772,931	72,400	38,470	300	1859*

* The year of the war in Italy.

THE THREE PANICS.

THE FIRST PANIC.

1847—1848.

As the question involved throughout these pages turns mainly upon the comparative strength of the English and French navies, the reader's attention will be frequently solicited to the preceding tables of naval expenditure, etc., in the two countries. They comprise:—

1. Accounts, in parallel columns, of the total yearly expenditure on the English and French navies, for the twenty-five years, from 1835 to 1859.

2. Accounts of the expenditure, during the same period, for wages in the English and French dockyards.

3. Lists of the numbers of seamen maintained in the two navies in each year for the same time.

There is also a list of the number of vessels in commission in each year during the same period in the French navy, for which there is no parallel list available in the English accounts.

It should be understood, however, that a comparison of the total expenditure in the two countries, *for any one year*, would be a very unfair test of the cost or strength of their respective navies. There are several very large items charged in the British navy estimates, as, for instance, the half-pay and pensions, which are found under other heads in the finance accounts of France. On the contrary, there are some smaller sums charged to the navy in France, which come under other categories of expenditure in England. The chief use of this table is to furnish an unbroken comparison of the *progress*

of expenditure in the two countries during a series of years; and with this view, the accounts of the Ministry of the Colonies, in which some changes have taken place to break the continuity, have been omitted.

For comparing the naval expenditure of the two countries for any one year, especially in what a French writer has called the "aggressive" outlay, a more accurate test is afforded by the second table, giving the amounts expended for wages in their respective dockyards.

But the truest comparison of the strength or cost of the two navies, in any given year, is afforded by the numbers of the seamen. The official representatives of the Admiralty in the House of Commons have always laid down the rule, that the vote for men is decisive of the whole amount of expenditure. In the words of the highest authority of our day: "It has been well ascertained with respect to the naval branch, and still more with respect to the other branches of our defensive force, that the number of men rules the amount of money voted on all the other branches of the various estimates."* Again, in a Report laid before Parliament, on the "Comparative State of the Navies of England and France,"† to which further allusion will be made, it is stated: "But, as in the case of the Army Estimates, nearly every vote is affected by the number of men; so, in the Navy Estimates, it will be found that almost every vote is influenced by the same consideration; as an increase in the number of seamen involves a corresponding increase in the force of ships, in the expense of bringing them forward and fitting them for service, and providing for wear and tear."

Before proceeding, it may be well to meet an objection. It has been said in the House of Commons,‡ that the public accounts are unreliable in France. That the *estimates* of the expenditure for the different ministerial departments are less reliable in France than in this country is universally admitted. This arises from two causes: the facility with which supplementary credits have been granted by the Executive—a privilege which has recently been renounced by the Emperor; and from the circumstance that the Estimates are prepared a

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* Sir James Graham, *Hansard*, cxxiv. 312. † *Par. Pap.* 182,—1859.
‡ Mr. Bentinck, *Hansard*, clxi. 1765.

year in advance of ours. For instance, our Navy Estimates, for 1862, are prepared in December, 1861; whilst in France the same process is going on for 1863. Hence, when the war between France and Austria broke out in the spring of 1859, as the navy expenditure for that year had been fixed in December, 1857, it followed necessarily that all the extra expenses for that war had to be met by supplementary credits.

But it must not be inferred that no record is kept of those supplementary expenses. Every *franc* is inserted in the *Bulletin des Lois*, and afterwards appears in the *Réglement définitif des Budgets*. Each item is allocated to the various ministries, and the *Compte Général des Finances* comprises absolutely every one of these items. Had it not been so, how could M. Fould, in his late programme, have exhibited the exact amount of the difference between the estimates and the expenditure over a long series of years? Ought not the recent unfavourable *exposé* of French finance to satisfy the most sceptical that those in power have not the unchecked control of the public accounts?

The system of public accounts in France is the most exact in principle, and the most rigidly sustained in practice, in the whole world; and as the Auditors (*La Cour des Comptes*) are irremovable judges, an error or a fraud is all but impossible. But it requires a delay of more than a year to obtain the audited accounts, and hence the above tables are only brought down to 1859.

There is one other point requiring a preliminary observation. It might be supposed, from the tone frequently assumed by our officials, when speaking in the House on the subject of the Navy of France, and from the pretended revelations which sometimes appear in a portion of the public press, that the government of that country is in the habit of taking sudden and secret resolutions respecting its naval armaments. So far is this from being the case, that every body acquainted with the subject knows that the French are far more open than ourselves in discussing and defining, publicly, beforehand, the amount and character of their naval force. With us, the inquiries of Committees of Parliament, or Royal Commissions, are confined to the details of administration; they are restrained from considering and pronouncing an opinion on the *amount* of force to be kept up, on the plea that that is the prerogative of

the Sovereign, to be exercised on the responsibility of the Cabinet. Not so in France, where Commissions, appointed by the Chambers or the Crown, discuss the future strength and organisation of the Navy for many years to come; and the result of their deliberations, with their recommendations, is published to the world.

It must not, however, be supposed that these plans are always carried to completion, for no country, perhaps, produces a greater number of abortive paper projects than France; but the government more frequently fall short of than exceed the recommendations of the Committees. For instance, at the present moment, the French government is regulating its expenditure, under the chief heads of its Naval Budget, by an Imperial decree of 1857, issued in consequence of the report of a Special Commission, appointed in 1855, and which fixed the outlay for fourteen years; but it is certain that new discoveries in naval architecture, if not the state of the finances, will lead to a modification of this programme.

There is something very puerile in the recent attempts to frighten the country with stories about secret preparations in the French dockyards. It would be just as possible to build a great hotel in secrecy in Paris, as to conceal the process of constructing a ship of war at Toulon or Cherbourg. Such tactics on the part of the alarmists are novel, and not complimentary to the intelligence of the public. The subject was treated with greater candour formerly. In introducing the Navy Estimates, in 1839, Mr. Wood (now Sir Charles Wood), the Secretary of the Admiralty, said:—"The French annual estimates contain the fullest information. The French carry publicity to a fault. They carry it, as Sir John Barrow has mentioned in his late life of Lord Anson, to their own detriment. There is no disguise about the state of their navy."

In comparing the expenditure of the two countries, it will be observed that they almost invariably rise and fall together. In the long run, this must be the case, because it has always been the recognised policy of the governments to preserve a certain relation to each other. Looking back for nearly a century, we shall find that in a time of peace France has been accustomed to maintain a naval force, not greatly varying from the proportion of two-thirds of our own. If, however, we turn

to the tables, in the first page, we shall find that in 1840-41, this proportion underwent a great and sudden derangement, and that, instead of being content with two-thirds of our force, the French navy approached almost to an equality with our own. Though remotely antecedent, this incident is not wholly unconnected with the first panic.

It was under these circumstances, that Sir Robert Peel's government was formed in 1841. The earliest utterances of that statesman, in the House of Commons, when at the head of a large conservative majority, indicated the line of policy which he was desirous of pursuing. "Is not the time come," said he, "when the powerful countries of Europe should reduce those military armaments which they have so sedulously raised? Is not the time come, when they should be prepared to declare that there is no use in such overgrown establishments? What is the advantage of one power greatly increasing its army and navy? Does it not see that other powers will follow its example? The consequence of this must be, that no increase of relative strength will accrue to any one power; but there must be a universal consumption of the resources of every country in military preparations. They are, in fact, depriving peace of half its advantages, and anticipating the energies of war whenever they may be required." And he thus proceeded to indicate a practical policy to the civilized world. "The true interest of Europe is to come to some one common accord, so as to enable every country to reduce those military armaments which belong to a state of war rather than of peace. I do wish that the councils of every country (or that the public voice and mind, if the councils did not) would willingly propagate such a doctrine."

The more than official earnestness of these remarks leaves no room to doubt that the speaker yearned for the opportunity of carrying into effect his peaceful and cosmopolitan policy. But the relations of England and France were, at that moment, peculiarly unfavourable to his views. During the previous year, whilst his political opponents were still in power, and when M. Thiers was at the head of the French government, the great diplomatic rupture had occurred between the two govern-

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* *Hansard*, vol. lix. pp. 403-4.

ments on the Eastern question – the effects of which have descended in increased armaments to the present time. Two rival statesmen, who wielded with consummate skill the combative pride, and the soaring vanity of these great nations, had encountered each other on the shores of Syria, where France was especially sensitive to defeat and loss of influence. The consequence was a deep popular irritation and sense of humiliation throughout the French nation.

It was under these circumstances, that these two statesmen, passing from office into opposition, became, from 1841, the persistent advocates, in their respective countries, of a policy that led to a constant increase of armaments. The genius of both belonged less to the present than to the past. The one revelled in the historical glories of the first Empire, exulted in being the author of the fortifications of Paris, talked of 800,000 soldiers for a peace establishment, and forced upon successive governments an increase of the navy. The other inherited the traditions of Pitt, saw in our great neighbour only the aggressive and warlike foe of our fathers, and urged on the vexed and unwilling ear of Sir Robert Peel the construction of fortifications, the augmentation of the navy, and the formation of the Militia.* The following extract from a speech, delivered July 30, 1845, might almost be taken for the utterance of 1860: —"Now, Sir, France, as I had occasion to state on a former occasion, has now a standing army of 340,000 men, fully equipped, including a large force of cavalry and artillery, and, in addition to that, 1,000,000 of the National Guard. I know that the National Guard of Paris consists of 100,000 men, trained, disciplined, reviewed, clothed, equipped, and accustomed to duty, and perfectly competent, therefore, to take the internal duty of the country, and to set free the whole of the regular force. Now, Sir, if France were a country separated from our own by an impassable barrier; if she had no navy; or if the Channel could not be crossed, I should say that this was a matter with which we had no concern. But that is not the case. In the first place, France has a fleet equal to ours. I do not speak of the number of vessels actually in existence, but of the fleet in commission and half-commission, in

* Vide, post, p. 20.

both which respects the fleet of France is equal to that of this country. But, again, the Channel is no longer a barrier. Steam-navigation has rendered that which was before impassable by a military force nothing more than a river passable by a steam bridge."*

These accents of mistrust and defiance were echoed from the Tribune of the Chamber of Deputies the following year, when M. Guizot was compelled by his active and brilliant opponent to enlarge his project for increasing the navy:—"We pay England," said M. Thiers, "the compliment of thinking only of her when determining our naval force; we never heed the ships which sally forth from Trieste or Venice; we care only for those which leave Portsmouth or Plymouth."†

Although we have been in the habit of assuming, for the last ten years, that our naval ascendancy has been endangered by the policy of the successor of Louis Philippe, it was during the last eight years of that king's reign, and especially for a year or two subsequent to the Syrian dispute, that a serious effort seemed really to be made to rival us at sea. The vast projects for extending the dockyards of France, especially Toulon, arose out of this diplomatic rupture. It seemed as though the government of that country sought to console the nation for the wounds which had been inflicted on its self-love, by enormous and costly preparations for future wars. But since nobody now believes that the "Citizen King," the "Napoleon of Peace," ever contemplated a descent on our shores, it would be a waste of time to enter into lengthened details respecting the first panic, which terminated with his downfall. Some of the incidents which preceded that event have, however, exercised so much influence on the two succeeding panics, that they cannot be altogether passed over without notice.

At the time to which we are now more particularly referring (1845-6), the first of these great political delusions had acquired no hold of the public mind. The principal contribution to the first panic, previous to the publication of the Duke of Wellington's letter, was the pamphlet of Prince Joinville. It is difficult now, after a calm perusal of this tract, to under-

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* Lord Palmerston, *Hansard*, lxxxii. 1223.

† Chamber of Deputies, 1846.

stand how it could have been pressed into the service of the alarmists. It is filled throughout with complaints of the inferiority of the French navy, and offers not a few probably unmerited compliments to the superior management of England. Here are its concluding words:—"I have been obliged, in the whole course of this little pamphlet, to make my country undergo an afflicting comparison with a country that is advanced so much before it in the knowledge of its interests; I have been obliged to expose the secret of our weakness compared to the greatness of British power; but I should think myself happy if, by the sincere avowal of those sorrowful truths, I were able to dissipate the illusion, in which are so many clever persons, as to the real condition of the navy of France, and to decide them to ask with me those salutary reforms which alone can give our navy a new era of power and glory."

The feelings of irritation which had been kept alive by portions of the press, in the interests of certain political parties in the two countries, from the time of the Syrian difficulty, and throughout the dispute on the Tahiti affair, in 1844, now found fresh aliment in the rupture of the two governments on the question of the Spanish marriages. It was in the midst of the alienation and suspicion with which the public mind regarded these proceedings of the French Court, that towards the end of 1847, the Letter of the Duke of Wellington on our National Defences made its appearance,—an event which led to an immediate invasion "panic," and furnished a never failing argument to successive governments for increased warlike expenditure. Nor was this the only evil produced by the Letter. It unfortunately gave rise to a host of imitators; for how could a military man, of whatever rank, be more patriotically employed than in following the example of the Commander-in-Chief, and proclaiming to the world the necessity for increased armaments? And, unhappily, this task could only be accomplished by rousing the hostile passions of two great nations, by appeals to the fears and resentment of the one, and accusations of meditated violence and treachery against the other.

The public has never been fully informed of the circumstances which led to the publication of this famous Letter. In a pamphlet which appeared in France, just previous to the

opening of the session of 1848, written by M. Chevalier, who ha dalready devoted his accomplished pen to the cause of the Anglo-French alliance, the Duke's letter had been treated in the character of an answer to Prince Joinville's publication. This drew from Lord John Russell an explanation in the House, on the authority of the Duke himself, in which he said that, "nothing could have given greater pain," to the writer, "than the publication of sentiments which he had expressed confidentially to a brother officer."* It was stated by Lord Palmerston, at a subsequent date, that the letter was written "in consequence of an able memorandum drawn up by Sir John Burgoyne."† Whoever gave it to the world must have assumed that it would possess an authority above criticism; otherwise, it contains passages which would have induced a friend to withhold it from publication. The concluding sentence, where, in speaking of himself, he says, "I am bordering upon seventy-seven years of age, passed in honour," affords sufficient proof that it was not intended for the public eye. The entire production, indeed, gives painful evidence of enfeebled powers. One extract will be sufficient; the italics are not in the original:

"I am accustomed to the consideration of these questions, and have examined and reconnoitred, over and over again, the whole coast from the North Foreland, by Dover, Folkestone, Beachy Head, Brighton, Arundel to Selsey Bill, near Portsmouth; and I say that, excepting immediately under the fire of Dover Castle, *there is not a spot on the coast on which infantry might not be thrown on shore at any time of tide, with any wind, and in any weather*, and from which such body of infantry so thrown on shore, would not find within a distance of five miles a road into the interior of the country, *through the cliffs*, practicable for the march of a body of troops."

Now, any person who has been in the habit of visiting Eastbourne and Hastings, knows that for half the year no prudent mariner brings his vessel within several miles of that coast, and that there is a considerable extent of shore where a landing is at all times impracticable. It may be safely

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* *Hansard*, xcvi. 909. † *Hansard*, clx. 18.

affirmed, that if any one but the Duke of Wellington had stated that there was any shore in the world, on which a body of troops could be landed "at any time of the tide, with any wind, and in any weather," the statement would have been deemed undeserving of notice. The assertion, however, passed unchallenged at the time, and the entire Letter was quoted as an unanswerable proof that the country was in danger. To have ventured on criticism or doubt would have only invited the accusation of want of patriotism.

Few people now remember the incidents of the invasion panic which culminated in the spring of 1848. It was the first occasion on which the attempt had been made to terrify the public with the idea of a sudden invasion from France in a time of peace, without a declaration of war, and without the hope of conquest, or even the glory of honourable warfare. The theory degraded our civilised and polite neighbours to the level of pirates. And yet so generally was it proclaimed by the London journals of the time, that the editor of that staid and philosophical print, the *Spectator*, drew on himself a remonstrance from his friend, the late Sir William Molesworth, in a letter dated January 17, 1848, from which the following is an extract :—

"You say that 'the next attack on England will probably be without notice ; that 5000 Frenchmen might inflict disgrace on some defenceless post ; 500 might insult British blood at Herne Bay, or even inflict indelible shame on the empire at Osborne House!' Good God! Can it be possible that you whom I ranked so high among the public instructors of this nation—that you consider the French to be ruffians, Pindarees, freebooters—that you believe it necessary to keep constant watch and ward against them, as our Saxon forefathers did against the Danes and the Nordmen, lest they should burn our towns, plunder our coasts, and put our queen to ransom," etc., etc.

It naturally followed, since the greatest military authority had proclaimed the country in danger, that it should be the fashion for civilians in high places to echo the cry of alarm. Even the peerage, that body which views all other agitations with so much serenity, partook of the excitement. Lord Ellesmere published a letter, bearing at its head the motto, "Awake, arise! or be for ever fallen!" in which he foretold, in case of an invasion, that the Guards would march out at one end of the

metropolis as the French entered at the other, and that on the Lord Mayor would be imposed the duty of converting the Mansion House into a place where billets would be found for the foreign army; upon which Sir Robert Peel dryly remarked, that "he would defy the Lord Mayor afterwards to show his face in Cheapside."*

It was under these circumstances, that Parliament assembled in 1848. The Whig Government, which had succeeded to power in 1846, on the disruption of the Conservative party, consequent upon the repeal of the Corn Laws, found themselves with a deficient revenue, arising from the late famine in Ireland, and great depression in nearly all branches of trade and industry. On the 18th February, Lord John Russell made his financial statement for the year. For the better understanding of what is to follow, it may be well to give his opening remarks on the state of the nation:—

"I shall proceed, Sir, at once, by reminding the House that the year which has passed over our heads, or I should perhaps say, the period of the last eighteen months, has been one which, excepting cases of foreign war or domestic insurrection, is without a parallel, I think, in the history of this country. The changes and vicissitudes of prices—the difficulties of commerce—the panic which more than once prevailed—the extreme distress of a part of the United Kingdom—the extraordinary efforts that were made to relieve that distress—altogether affected the state of this country to a degree, that I believe it would not be easy to find an example of such distress in our history."†

After alluding to the great increase that had taken place in the French navy, he proposed, in order to meet the necessity for increased defensive armaments, and in accordance with the advice in the Duke of Wellington's letter, to re-organise the militia, and to slightly modify, without materially increasing, the regular forces. To cover the deficiency in the revenue, and to meet the increased charges for militia, etc, the minister proposed an addition of 5d. in the pound to the income-tax, thus raising it from 7d. to a shilling. The proposition, so far as concerned the increase of our armaments, appeared so moderate,

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* *Hansard*, xcvi. 1074. † *Hansard*, xcvi. 900.

when viewed in connection with the excitement that had reigned out of doors with respect to the designs of our neighbours, that it led Sir Robert Peel to remark—

"After the panic which prevailed in this country about a month since, I am glad to find the tide has ebbed so fast, and that the alarm on the subject of invasion has visibly abated. I was afraid the Government might have been unduly influenced by that alarm; and I am relieved when I learn that it is not intended to make any increase in the military or naval force."

But the budget met with no favour from any part of the House, and it soon became evident that the intended addition to the income-tax would prove fatal to the whole scheme. The proposed increase of expenditure for militia, etc., was denounced by the reformers, who demanded a reduction of the existing establishments; whilst it was still more ominous to hear Mr. Bankes, the representative of the country gentlemen, declare, that "that was not the moment to talk of valour and triumph, but the time for reflecting how they could remedy the evils which pressed so heavily on the great mass of the community."*

Whilst the Government measure was still under discussion, a portentous event occurred in France, which, if it had not involved the gravest consequences to Europe and the world, would have imparted a character of burlesque to the closing scene of the first invasion panic. On the evening of the 24th of February, 1848, whilst the House of Commons was in session, a murmur of conversation suddenly arose at the door, and spread throughout the House, when was witnessed—what never occurred before or since, in the writer's experience—a suspension for a few minutes of all attention to the business of the House, whilst every member was engaged in close and earnest conversation with his neighbour.† The intelligence had arrived of the abdication and flight of Louis Philippe, and of the proclamation of the Republic. The monarch and his ministers, whose

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* *Hansard*, xcvi. 932.

† The writer of these pages was sitting by the side of the late Mr. Hume when the tidings reached their bench. Sir Robert Peel was on the opposite front seat, alone, his powerful party having been broken and scattered by his great measure of Corn-Law Repeal. "I'll go and tell Sir Robert the news," exclaimed Mr. Hume, and, stepping across the floor,

ambitious projects had furnished the pretexts for our warlike armaments, and the gallant prince, whose pamphlet had sounded like a tocsin in our ears, were now on their way to claim the hospitality of England.

Under any other circumstances than those in which the country now found itself, this astounding intelligence would have probably caused an increase rather than a diminution of the invasion panic. There was, indeed, a momentary effort, in certain quarters, to turn to account the apparition of the dread Republic, with all the grim reminiscences associated with its motto of "*Liberté, Egalité, et Fraternité.*" But the nation was too much harassed with its internal difficulties to listen to the suggestion of those who would revive the terrors of an invasion. Bad as had been the condition of the country, it was now felt that there was a worse state of things impending, from the destruction of confidence, the suspension of trade, and the interruption to labour, which the revolutions, now spreading over the Continent, were sure to produce. Public meetings were called; men of influence, of different political parties, mingled on the same platform, to denounce the increase of taxation, to repudiate the desire for the Militia, or any other addition to the defensive armaments of the country, and to call for a reduction of the public expenditure. Petitions, in this sense, poured into the House. The Government took the alarm; and on the 28th February, the Chancellor of the Exchequer withdrew the budget for amendment. The Militia Bill was heard of no more for four years. A Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to examine into the Military and Naval expenditure, with a view to greater economy in the Estimates. Before the close of the session, considerable reductions were announced. The Income-tax remained at its previous amount of 7*d.* in the pound for the remainder of the

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he seated himself by his side, and communicated the startling intelligence. On returning to his place, he repeated, in the following words, the commentary of the ex-minister:—"This comes of trying to carry on a government by means of a mere majority of a Chamber, without regard to the opinion out of doors. It is what these people (pointing with his thumb over his shoulder to the protectionists behind him) wished me to do, but I refused."

year; and, on the meeting of Parliament, in 1849, notwithstanding that a Bonaparte had just previously been elected President of the French Republic, and that the Continent generally was in a state of revolutionary disquiet, the Queen's Speech contained the following announcement:—

"The present aspect of affairs has enabled me to make large reductions on the Estimates of last year."

The advocates of a system of direct taxation may profit by the admission:—there can be no doubt, that the proposal to add 5*d.* in the pound to the Income-tax, mainly contributed to put an end to the first invasion panic.

THE SECOND PANIC.

1851—1852—1853.

In ordinary years, when nothing occurs to concentrate public attention on this branch of the budget, it will be observed that the expenditure on the "Services" has a tendency to increase in proportion to the prosperity of the country.* Taking the amount of our foreign trade as the test of the progress of the nation, we shall find, looking back over the last ten or twelve years, that the amount of exports, and the amount of Military and Naval Estimates, have been augmented in nearly an equal ratio, both having been about doubled. It would seem as if there were some unseen power behind the Government, always able, unless held in check by an agitation in the country, to help itself to a portion of the national savings, limited only by the taxable patience of the public. A combination of circumstances, however, counteracted this tendency at the period to which we are now referring, the most influential of which was that "the landed interest was in a dissatisfied and uneasy state from anticipations of the great change in the commercial policy of the country, which was to come into full effect at the commencement of the present year"† (1849). Moreover, the party

* "I have observed, that there is always a great deal of pressure for an increase of the army and navy, and a great complaint about the defencelessness of the country, whenever there is a surplus income over expenditure. Why, it is a tempting thing, a large heap of money at the table of the Exchequer, and the knowledge, on the part of the 'Services,' that if John Bull can be sufficiently frightened into the cry for increased defences, there is a very good chance of some of the money being divided among them and theirs. Now, they have an eye on the surplus at this moment. I have an eye also on that surplus, which makes me peculiarly interested in this question; I want to apply it to the repeal of the taxes on knowledge; and by spreading sound information among the people, doing something for their future happiness and prosperity."—*Speech of* Rt. Hon. T. Milner Gibson, M.P., *Manchester, January* 26, 1853.

† *Annual Register*, vol. xci. p. 2.

which had been for many years engaged in the struggle for the overthrow of the Corn-Laws, threw its energies into the agitation for a reduction of expenditure; whilst the approaching year of the Great Exhibition tended to hold in check ideas of a warlike nature, and to make it the fashion, for a time at least, to profess a faith in the tendency of the world towards peace.

The consequence of this state of things was a constant reduction of the military and naval expenditure from 1847 to 1851, as will be seen on reference to the preceding tables. During this time, with the exception of the usual letters from Admiral Napier in the *Times* on the state of the navy, and a volume published at the close of 1850, by Sir Francis Head, on "The Defenceless State of the Nation," which was calculated to throw ridicule on the subject by its exaggerations, little was said about a French invasion. Even the Great Duke's letter was for a time forgotten. But only for a time, the occasion alone was wanting to revive the panic with increased violence. The country had been rapidly advancing towards that state of prosperity when its timidity and pugnacity seem equally susceptible of excitement. Under the influence of free trade and the gold discoveries, our exports, which in 1848 had been £52,849,000, amounted in 1851 to £74,448,000: they were destined to reach, in 1852, £78,076,000; and to rise in 1853 to £98,933,000; thus being nearly doubled in five years. The revenue was in a satisfactory state, and the landed interest had nearly recovered from the despondency into which it had been thrown by the repeal of the Corn Laws.

It was under these circumstances, that the *coup d'état* of December 2nd, 1851, and the re-election of Louis Napoleon as President of the Republic, with augmented powers, furnished the occasion for the outburst of the second invasion-panic. From that day to the meeting of Parliament, on the 3rd February, a large portion of the metropolitan journals teemed with letters and articles of the most exciting character. The course pursued by these writers was inconsistent enough. They commenced by assailing personally, with unmeasured invective, the author of the *coup d'état*, and heaping contemptuous epithets on the French people who had rewarded him with their suffrages; and then forthwith they raised the cry of invasion, and proclaimed our defenceless condition!—Conduct which, as will

be seen, drew on them the animadversions of the leading statesmen, on the meeting of Parliament. At the same time, there was the usual eruption of pamphlets, written chiefly by military and naval officers, containing projects for every variety of defensive armament.

In the debate on the address, on the first night of the session of 1852, almost every speaker alluded with disapprobation to the inflammatory language of the press.

"I say that it is more than imprudent," said the Earl of Derby, "that it is more than injudicious, that it is more than folly, that it is perfect madness, at one and the same time to profess a belief in the hostile intentions of a foreign country, and to parade before the eyes of that very people the supposed inability of this country to defend itself; to magnify the resources of your supposed assailant, and to point out how easy would be the invasion if not the subjugation of this country (though, thank God! the most violent have not yet spoken of subjugation); but to speak of that invasion, accompanying it with details of the fearful amount of horror and bloodshed which, under any circumstances, must attend it, and then, in the same breath, to assail with every term of obloquy, of vituperation, and abuse, the public and private character of the man who wields that force which you say is irresistible."*

And again, speaking of the disposition of the President, he said:—

"My Lords, I will go further, and I will say that I firmly believe that the French President personally is fully disposed to entertain friendly relations and to maintain a pacific policy towards other nations. But, my Lords, I think that if anything could divert him from that course, if he were a man likely to be worked upon by his own personal feelings—if anything were likely to divert him from that course of policy which I believe his inclination and his sense of the interests of France are likely to make him take, it would be the injudicious and, I may add, unjustifiable language which has been made use of by a large portion of the public press of this country, in commenting on the character of the French Government and people."†

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* *Hansard*, cxix. 22. † *Hansard*, cxix. 21.

In the House of Commons, on the same occasion, Lord John Russell, then Prime Minister, observed :—

"But really, to hear or read some of the letters, some of the language used by some portions of the press, one would imagine that these two great nations, so wealthy, so similar in enlightenment, were going to butcher one another, merely to try what would be the effect of percussion caps and needle guns."*

Both these statesmen, however, afforded substantial justification to the alarmists whom they thus eloquently rebuked, by intimating their determination to "prepare our defences," in order to make "invasion impossible." The public, of course, attributed their language to diplomatic reserve, whilst their action was quietly accepted as proof of impending danger.

As we were destined during the year 1852 to witness the reorganisation of the militia, and an augmentation of our army and navy, and as the arguments by which these increased armaments were voted will be found to have exclusive reference to the danger of an invasion from France, it will be well to turn for a moment to the tables, and see exactly what the French Government had been doing since the downfall of Louis Philippe. Though it is rather beside the question, for we have never professed to match our land forces against those of France, it may be premised, that the French Army was undergoing some reduction, and that the National Guard, whose million of armed men had been referred to with such alarming emphasis by Lord Palmerston in 1845, was being rapidly disbanded, and was destined ere long to disappear, with the exception of a nominal force kept up in a few large cities.

A reference to the tables will show, that, during the years 1849, 1850, and 1851, the period which intervened between the first and second panic, the strength of the French navy, whether measured by the total expenditure, the number of men, or the number of ships in commission, was considerably less that in any three years since 1840. It will be seen, that the French expenditure, with the number of men and of ships in commission, both absolutely and in proportion to the British, was at the lowest point in 1851, the year which witnessed the renewal of the panic. These facts were stated at the time by

* *Hansard*, cxix. 102.

those who resisted the increase of our armaments and confronted the alarm of invasion; but their statements were discredited.

On the 16th February, 1852, Lord John Russell explained to the House his proposed Militia Bill. He alluded, at the outset, to his measure of 1848, the failure of which he frankly attributed to the necessity he was then under of proposing an increase of taxation. To demonstrate that he was not now acting under the pressure of the panic, he thus referred to the state of things under which he had formerly brought forward a similar project,— "At the time at which I then addressed the House, Louis Philippe was on the throne of France; there was no apparent revolution at hand; the disposition of that king was known to be pacific; his counsels were moderate and wise."* This is an illustration of that curious feature in these political delusions, that we are always called on to forget them as soon as they have served the purpose for which they are created. A convenient veil is here drawn over the panic caused by Prince Joinville's pamphlet, the Duke of Wellington's letter, the Spanish marriages, the predicted flight of the Guards from London, and every other incident that had played its part prior to 1848. Lord John Russell now proposed a plan by which it should be possible to enrol for the first year not less than 70,000 men; in the next year, 100,000; in the third, about 120,000; with the possibility of increase to 150,000. But the Militia Bill was destined to be fatal to the ministry of which he had been premier since the fall of Sir Robert Peel's Government in 1846.

A word of explanation is necessary to throw a light on what followed. During the recess of Parliament, Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Minister, had withdrawn from the Government. From the explanations which now took place, it appeared that although there had been anterior differences between him and his colleagues, indeed between the Sovereign and her Foreign Secretary, the immediate cause of his retirement was the unauthorised expression of his approbation of the *coup d'état* of December 2nd, 1851. It was foreseen that this secession menaced the existence of a Cabinet already weak, and a few days only were required, after the meeting of Parliament, to

* *Hansard*, cxix. 551.

verify this view. On the motion to bring in the Local Militia Bill, on the 20th February, 1852, Lord Palmerston carried an amendment for giving a more extended scope to the measure, which was followed by the resignation of Lord John Russell's Government, and the advent of Lord Derby to power.

On the first exposition of his views as Prime Minister, on the 27th February, the Earl of Derby spoke as follows:—

"My Lords, I believe that our naval forces were never in a better or more effective condition than at this moment. I believe that for all purposes, whether as regards the protection of our own shores, the defence of the numerous and distant colonies which form our empire, or for the protection of that extended commerce which crosses every sea and fills every port in the wide world, I believe that, for all such purposes, our navy was never in a more effective state than it is now."

As soon as the new ministry were constituted, they prepared another Militia Bill, which was introduced into the House by the Home Secretary, on the 29th March. This measure met the approval of Lord Palmerston, to whose energetic support it mainly owed its success. He could almost, indeed, claim to be its author; for it transpired, incidentally, in the course of the discussion, that his frequent questions in the House, in the time of Sir Robert Peel's ministry, had had the effect of inducing them to prepare a measure for revising the Militia laws, but a change of ministry had prevented them from bringing it forward.† Lord Palmerston, moreover, in the course of the debates, identified himself more exclusively with the policy of the Bill, by stating that he had pressed on Lord John Russell, in 1846, the necessity of a similar measure.‡ To him, also, was left the task of finding arguments for the Bill, and it must be admitted that he fulfilled the duties of an advocate with a courage, at least, that could not be surpassed.

The reasons assigned by Mr. Walpole for introducing the measure, however ably stated, were so cautiously guarded by disavowals of any special ground of alarm, and so prudently seasoned with pledges for our peaceful foreign relations, that

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* *Hansard*, cxix. p. 894. † Mr. Sidney Herbert, *Hansard*, cxix. 587.
‡ *Hansard*, cxix. 575.

they were almost as good arguments for his opponents as his own party; whilst the more general motives assigned, founded on vague and shadowy assumptions of possible danger, would have been equally indisputable if our existing navy had been ten times as efficient as it had just been declared to be by Lord Derby.

Lord Palmerston took a much bolder course. Falling back on his own idea of steam-navigation having given an advantage to our neighbour, or, to use his favourite phrase, having "thrown a bridge across the Channel," he now insisted on the practicability of fifty or sixty thousand men being transported, without notice, from Cherbourg to our shores in a single night. Such a declaration had not been before heard from one holding high rank in that House. It overleapt all reliance on our diplomacy, or our fleets; and, strange enough in one who had offered such eager congratulations to the author of the *coup d'état*, the assumption of such a danger as this implied that our neighbour was little better than a buccaneer. But this hypothesis of sudden invasion is absolutely indispensable for affording the alarmists any standing ground whatever. Take away the liability to surprise, by admitting the necessity of a previous ground of quarrel, and the delays of a diplomatic correspondence, and you have time to collect your fleet, and drill* an army. Admit the argument of suddenness of danger, and the only way of preventing your coasts and metropolis from being invaded by an army of fifty or sixty thousand men, is by being always prepared with an organised and a disciplined force to repel them.

It was natural that such views should not pass unquestioned by intelligent professional men; among whom the veteran General who represented Westminster was prominent in showing the practical difficulties of sending large expeditions over sea, and in demonstrating that "the sudden arrival of a French army in this metropolis was simply an impossibility."† Here is a specimen of the undaunted courage with which Lord

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* "Give us a good stout man, and let us have him for sixty days to train him, and he will be as good a soldier as you can have."—*Evidence of* Lord Hardinge, *Commander-in-Chief, before Sebastopol Committee.*

† *Hansard*, cxx. p. 1040.

Palmerston set at nought the experience of the hero of a score of battle fields :—

"My hon. and gallant friend (Sir De Lacy Evans) stated, that in collecting a large force for the purpose of crossing the Channel, such an extensive preparation must be made as would give us ample notice; but he is much mistaken with regard to the want of facilities which neighbouring countries possess for collecting together a formidable force and bringing it over to this country, without our having lengthened, or, indeed, even timely notice. The very ship despatched to convey to this country intelligence of the threatened armament would probably not reach our shores much sooner than the hostile expedition." *

The naval authorities in the House were also heard on a question in which the character and efficiency of their service were so much involved. Admiral Berkeley, who had been a Lord of the Admiralty under the previous Government, remarked that, "Lord Palmerston had spoken of the French being enabled to raise 50,000 or 60,000 men in Cherbourg; but he did not tell the House how these men were to be transported across the Channel;" and the gallant speaker went on to say, "he would tell the noble Lord, the member for Tiverton, that it would take fifty or sixty vessels to embark those men he spoke of as being ready for action at Cherbourg, and it would take as many more vessels to protect them in the Channel." He added, with a view to allay the "absurd panic that had lately run through the country," that with an addition of 4,000 men and 1,000 boys to the navy, he would undertake to say that they would have a fleet of thirty steamers in the Channel, none of which would be under 900 or 1,000 tons, and that in the presence of such a force, he would defy any enemy to attempt a surprise; adding, characteristically, that "he should like to see them attempt to disembark on our shores in the face of such a force."†

Incidental to these debates, was a motion made on the 30th March, by Mr. Anderson (the head of the great Peninsular and Oriental Steam Ship Company), "to show how invasion might be rendered impossible," in which he called attention to the

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* *Hansard*, cxx. p. 293.

† *Hansard*, cxx. pp. 1136-7.

Report of a Committee, appointed at his instance in 1849, which had recommended the Government to retain the services of our numerous merchant steamers as a reserve force for the defence of our shores. He pointed out the great advantage this country possessed over all others in the number of its merchant steamers; that for every horse-power possessed by France, we had twenty (in sailing vessels our superiority in tonnage being only as five to one); he stated, from evidence before the Committee, that upwards of a thousand of these vessels could be made available in case of war, and pledged himself to produce a private tradesman, who, for £200 would fit the largest steamer to carry the heaviest pivot gun; and he alleged that the private Company with which he was connected could alone furnish vessels enough to form a line within signal distance of each other from the Channel Islands to the North Foreland.* Mr. Anderson went into the subject with a thorough practical knowledge of all its details, and carried the House, as he had carried his Committee, with him. His motion was accepted by the Government, but never acted on.

This motion was, however, only an episode in that great debate of the session, which reflected the panic that had been excited in certain quarters out of doors. In spite of the opposition of the liberals and the free-trade party, the Militia Bill was passing through its various stages; and Lord Palmerston's theory of a nocturnal invasion, by a large army, continued to be the pivot of the debate. The weight of professional authority having gone so strongly against this theory, civilians were now encouraged to speak out; and Lord John Russell, towards the close of the debate on the second reading, remarked, with unwonted bluntness, that "he did not wish to be mixed up with those who entertained apprehensions of the sudden arrival in this country of 50,000 hostile troops in a single night, without notice of any kind being received in this country; or that we should hear of an army marching up to London without our having had any previous symptoms of hostility. Those were notions which were founded upon panic rather than on reasonable calculation."† It was natural, too, that those members of the House who were identified with that body of British repre-

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* *Hansard*, cxx. pp. 369—379. † *Hansard*, cxx. 1090.

sentatives residing at foreign capitals, whom Burke has designated "licensed spies," should have revolted at such an imputation of want of vigilance on their part as was implied in this argument of sudden invasion, and they found an ardent and eloquent defender in the present Sir Robert Peel, who had just previously withdrawn from the field of diplomacy:—

"What, I should like to know," said he, "is meant by the term 'sudden invasion' which is so often used, but with little consideration? The noble lord, the member for Tiverton (Lord Palmerston), has defined it thus: 'We have to provide,' he says, 'not against a danger which may happen in six or eight months, but which may happen in a month or a fortnight, from the time when it is first apprehended.' I ask the House, and I ask the country, is it possible to admit this definition of the noble Lord? Let the House for one moment figure to itself, the noble Lord sitting in Downing-street, with all the threads of European diplomacy, concentrated, like so many electric wires in his cabinet; and let the House then figure to itself the surprise of the noble Lord, on being told that that day fortnight 150,000 men were to be landed on the shores of Britain. Do you think the noble Lord believes this to be possible? Not at all." *

Following after nearly the whole of these speakers, and on the last night of the debate on the second reading of the Militia Bill, Lord Palmerston thus manfully stood his ground:—"The application of steam to navigation has in effect made a bridge over the Channel, and has given the means of quick attack—an attack on a scale of magnitude such as did not exist before. Again, it is said we should know beforehand, if any preparations were being made. I say you might not know, because by the internal arrangements of railways, the distribution of troops is such that 50,000 or 60,000 men might be collected at Cherbourg before you knew anything of the matter; aad those who have seen what those immense works are, must be perfectly aware that such a number of men could walk from the quay into their vessels, as easily as they could walk into their barrack-yard. A single night would bring them over, and all our naval preparations, be they what they might, could

* *Hansard*, cxx. p. 1078.

not be relied on to prevent the arrival of such an expedition, as no batteries or gun-boats we might have on our shores could be relied on to prevent the landing of the expedition when it had arrived."*

With what a grim smile of incredulity would the threat of this nocturnal apparition have been received by both sides of the House if it had been urged in support of the Militia Bill of 1848, when the country gentlemen were too much haunted with the free-trade spectre, and the commercial members too seriously preoccupied with their distresses to have allowed themselves to be scared by so fantastical an appeal to their imagination! But the "Country Party" were now in power, their protectionist alarms were dissipated, and they welcomed the Militia Bill with acclamation. An increasing revenue, with a surplus in the Exchequer, and a prosperous trade, insured the success of the bill; which, however, was not passed without a determined opposition, led on by the free-trade party. In the course of the struggle, it was mentioned by Mr. Moffatt,† as a proof of the unpopularity of the bill, that nearly 800 petitions had been presented against it, and not one in its favour. It was certainly a singular spectacle, to see the representatives of the great centres of population and wealth, with the metropolitan members at their head, resisting a measure which had been brought forward on the plea that it was indispensable for their security!

Where then could have been the "panic"? will be the obvious inquiry. This question was frequently and sarcastically asked in the course of the debate; and it was answered in terms not over complimentary to the parties referred to. Mr. Hume bluffly remarked, that, "our present panics were not due, as in times past, to the old women, but to our having too many clubs about London, containing so many half-pay officers, who had nothing to do but to look about for themselves and their friends. These were the people who wrote to the newspapers, anxious to bring grist to the mill somehow or other."‡ And Captain Scobell, alluding to the same subject, said—"If he added a remark not very complimentary to the other branch of

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* *Hansard*, cxx. p. 1104. † *Hansard*, cxx. p. 1116.

‡ *Hansard*, cxx. p. 285.

the service, it should be jocularly; but the alarm about invasion was chiefly expressed by soldiers, from the illustrious Duke downwards. Sir Francis Head was a soldier; and so was the 'Swiss Colonel'; and many of them had, by their writings, helped to raise and keep up the alarm. And the reason was plain; they could not comprehend the capabilities of resistance that might be made on the ocean, and especially the resources that had been put into our hands by the power of steam."*

Lord Derby's Government having passed their Militia Bill, empowering them to raise 80,000 men, besides other measures, a dissolution took place on the first of July, and the new Parliament assembled for a short session before Christmas.

In the meantime, two events had taken place—the death of the Duke of Wellington, and the announcement of the approaching re-establishment of the Empire in France—which were exercising a considerable influence on the public mind. The former occurrence had naturally attracted universal attention to the biography of the Great Warrior, whose military exploits filled the pages of the public journals, became the engrossing theme of our public speakers, and resounded from even many a pulpit. Public attention was thus carried back to the long and mutually destructive wars which we had waged with France, and it was but natural that some of the old national animosity should have been revived. This feeling received a great impulse from what was occurring on the other side of the Channel. By a singular coincidence, the imposing national tribute of a public funeral in St. Paul's, on the 18th November, 1852, was followed by the voting for the Empire in France on the 21st. The historical painter might have represented the third Napoleon rising from the yet open tomb of the vanquisher of the first! What wonder, if in some minds there was the irritating consciousness that all the great deeds of the departed hero had not borne permanent fruits? The feeling of apprehension, however, predominated. The traditional terror connected with the name of Bonaparte was revived; people began again to talk of invasion, and before Christmas the alarmists had more complete possession of the field than at any previous time.

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* *Hansard*, cxix. p. 1449.

On the 6th December, 1852, Lord Malmesbury formally announced, in the House of Lords, the election of the Emperor of the French. He spoke in terms of the most unqualified confidence of the friendly and pacific intentions of the ruler and people of France. "I believe," said his lordship, "that the Emperor himself, and the great mass of his people, deeply feel the necessity, for the interests of both countries, that we should be on a footing of profound peace; and, on the other hand, they see the great folly and crime which it would be on either side to provoke war. They must know that a war, as far as it would lead to the subjugation of either country by the other, is an absurdity; that neither country, so great, so powerful, and so independent, could in any manner subjugate the other, and that, therefore, war must be as useless as cruel, and as inglorious as useless."*

Nothing could have been more satisfactory than this announcement, had it not been accompanied by a practical commentary elsewhere, which, in the eyes of the unsophisticated public, converted these excellent sentiments into hollow diplomatic phrases. On the very same evening on which this communication was made to the Lords, the Government proposed in the Commons an addition of 5,000 seamen and 1,500 marines to the navy, on the ground, as alleged by the Secretary of the Admiralty, that "the time had arrived when, with the most pacific intentions, it was absolutely necessary that we should put our Channel defences in a new position, and man the Channel with a large force."† Had it been his studied purpose to furnish arguments to the alarmists out of doors, nothing could have been contrived more calculated to swell the panic cry of invasion than the tone of mystery and reserve with which the naval secretary deprecated all discussion on this vote:—

"He trusted, that if he should then decline to enter into any detailed information with respect to that vote, no gentleman would attribute such a course to a desire to treat him individually with discourtesy, but would feel that it was owing to *the determination at which the Government had arrived, after the most serious consideration, that it would be better, under existing circumstances, not to enter into any particulars with respect to that*

* *Hansard*, cxxiii. 975. † *Hansard*, cxxiii. 1006.

course. He asked the present vote from the House of Commons, not as a vote of confidence in any particular ministry, but as a vote of confidence in that Executive which, whatever party might be at the head of the Government, must necessarily be charged with the defence of the country, *must necessarily be in possession of secret and important intelligence, and must necessarily be the fitting and only judge how far that intelligence ought to be communicated to the House.*"*

If any thing could add to the mistrust in the public mind which this was calculated to produce, it was the readiness with which the leading statesmen on the opposition side of the House accepted the doctrine of implicit confidence in the Executive. Sir Francis Baring, in expressing his approval of the proposed increase, remarked, that "no one knew more than himself how difficult it was to state the grounds for any increase. It was for the Government to state, on their responsibility, what they thought necessary for the service of the country, and he was not one of those who would oppose what they thought necessary."† This doctrine, which, if generally acted upon, would be an abdication of one of the chief functions of the House of Commons, proceeds upon a double fallacy—First, in assuming that the Executive can, in these days, be in possession of secrets unknown to the public respecting the warlike preparations or the political attitude of other countries; and, secondly, in assuming, that, if the Government possessed any such secret information, there could be half as much inconvenience from disclosing it to the House of Commons as from the adoption of this principle of abject confidence in the Ministry.

The proposed increase in the navy was, however, carried without a division. An addition of 2,000 men and 1,000 horses for the artillery was also voted. There had been 3,000 men previously added to the army, and, as we have seen, power was given to the Government to raise 80,000 men for the militia, 50,000 for the first year, and 30,000 more for the second. All this was achieved during their few months of office by the Earl of Derby's Government, who, so long as they were engaged in making these additions to our establishments, met with support from their opponents; but, that task achieved, thenceforth the

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* *Hansard*, cxxiii. 1006—7. † *Hansard*, cxxiii. 1013.

doctrine of implicit confidence in the Executive was no longer extended to them, and they were overthrown a few days afterwards in a division on the budget, which was virtually a vote of want of confidence. They were succeeded by Lord Aberdeen's administration.

This increase in our armaments failed to allay, in the slightest degree, the agitation of the alarmists. It seems to be the peculiar characteristic of these panics, that they who fall under their influence are deprived of all remembrance of what has been already done for their security. This state of mind is natural enough in those who embrace the hypothesis that we are in nightly danger of an invasion, without notice or provocation, by an army of 50,000 men. These persons do not employ their minds in discussing the probable grounds of quarrel with France, or in speculating on the chances of a rupture; but they assume the constant disposition for war on the part of our neighbour, as well as his complete preparation for attack. From the moment that such a theory of invasion as this is adopted, any plan of defence must necessarily be insufficient for security. It is to this state of mind that all the writers and speakers on the subject addressed themselves,* as may

* The following are specimens:—

A Letter on the Defence of England by Corps of Volunteers and Militia, by Sir Chas. Jas. Napier.

The Invasion of England, by an Englishman and a Civilian.

National Defences, by Montagu Gore, Esq.

A Letter to Lord John Russell, containing Suggestions for forming a Reserve Force, signed "George Paget."

Memorandum on the Necessity of a Secretary of State for our Defence and War Establishments.

Proposals for the Defence of the Country by means of a Volunteer Force, by John Kinloch, late Captain Second Life Guards.

Defensive Position of England, by Captain Chas. Knox.

The Peril of Portsmouth, by Jas. Fergusson, Esq.

A Plan for the formation of a Maritime Militia, by Captain C. Elliot.

Observations on Commissariat, Field Service, and Home Defences, by Sir Randolph I. Routh.

The National Defence of England, by Baron P. E. Translated by Capt. J. E. Addison.

Thoughts on National Defence, by Rear-Admiral Bowles.

Brief Suggestions on the Subject of War and Invasion.

Notes on the Defensive Resources of Great Britain, by Captain Fyers, Half-pay Royal Artillery.

be seen by a mere glance at the titles of the pamphlets, which issued in unprecedented numbers from the press in the present year (1852).

The alarm was constantly stimulated by startling paragraphs in the newspapers. One day the French army at Rome was reported to be chafing and dissatisfied, because it could not share in the invasion of England and the sack of London; the next, there were whispered revelations of a secret plan divulged by General Changarnier for invading England and seizing the metropolis (which he publicly contradicted); then we were told of a plot for securing a naval station in the West Indies; next, the French Government had sent an order for steam frigates to Messrs. Napier, of Glasgow (which was contradicted on the authority of those gentlemen); there was a cry of alarm at the apparition of a French ship of war at Dover, which, it afterwards turned out, had been driven in by stress of weather; then there were small French vessels of war seen moving about the Isle of Wight, to the surprise of some of our authorities, who should have known that the French Government are bound by convention to send cruisers into the Channel to see that the fisheries regulations are observed by their fishermen; and then came the old story of French vessels being seen taking soundings in our waters, though, as every body knows, the most perfect charts of the Channel, published under the authority of the Admiralty, may be purchased for a few shillings.

But these little paragraphs, which flew from journal, to journal, would have fallen harmless on the public ear, if they had not been accompanied by alarming reports from "our own correspondents" in Paris, of the immense increase going on in the French navy. Besides, there was the eloquent silence of our own Secretary of the Admiralty when he proposed the augmentation of our navy. What could that reserve and secrecy mean, but something too frightful to reveal? True, the French army had been reduced 50,000 men, and the National Guard was practically dissolved, but that did not concern us;—what object could a Bonaparte possibly have in doubling the strength of his navy, if it was not to attack England? To show to what an extent this delusion gained credence, let us quote from an article in that generally accurate historical record, the *Annual*

Register for September 21, 1852:—"The French have been making gigantic efforts to raise their navy to a formidable strength;" and, after entering into many details to show the large additions made to their fleet, the article thus concludes:—"Their navy seems to have doubled in effective strength within the two years of the Prince President's power."* So strong were the feelings of suspicion, jealousy, and apprehension on this subject at the re-assembling of Parliament in February, 1853, that Mr. Ewart, with a view of offering a public denial to these alarming rumours, took the extraordinary course of addressing a letter of inquiry to M. Ducos, the Minister of Marine, whose answer, which obtained general publicity at the time, is here reproduced:—

"Paris, *February* 25, 1853.

"Sir,—The questions which you do me the honour to put in your letter of the 19th of February might perhaps appear to me unusual, if my mind really entertained the strange ideas which some persons appear to ascribe to me in England.

"But, far from considering these questions indiscreet or inopportune, I rejoice at them, because they afford me an opportunity of giving you the complete assurance of my peaceful sentiments.

"I should consider it as the greatest of misfortunes if a serious misunderstanding should break out between the two nations; and I desire with all my heart, that the best intelligence may continue to prevail between them.

"Your newspapers make much stir about our presumed warlike preparations. I confine myself to declaring to you that I have not armed a single gun-boat, stirred a single cannon, or equipped a single sailor. I remain the calm spectator of the enormous expenses which you are making to conjure away an imaginary danger; and I admire the facility with which you augment your budget when no real necessity prescribes it.

"If the members of your Parliament, who are so pre-occupied with our projects of invasion, would give themselves the trouble of paying us a short visit, they would be more surprised

* *Annual Register*, p. 148, "Chronicle."

than I am myself, perhaps, at the extreme readiness with which the rumour (almost amounting to a pleasantry) of our supposed warlike preparations has been received among you.

"I thank you, Sir, for allowing me to establish a certain degree of intercourse between us; and I beg you to accept the expression of my most distinguished sentiments.

"THEODORE DUCOS.

"Monsieur Ewart, Membre de la Chambre
des Communes, &c."

With M. Ducos, the writer of these pages had not the honor of a personal acquaintance; but he happened to be on terms of very intimate friendship with one of his colleagues, with whom he was in correspondence at the time, and from whom he received the following note, which had been written to him by the Minister of Marine, at the moment of receiving the letter of inquiry from Mr. Ewart. As this letter was penned by M. Ducos under circumstances which precluded any idea of concealment or misrepresentation, it will be read with probably greater interest than the more formal communication, especially that part which refers to the cabinet device, common to both countries, of resorting to imaginary terrors as a means of swelling budgets and strengthening majorities:—

"MY DEAR COLLEAGUE,

"Do you read the English journals and the debates in Parliament?

"Verily, I am astonished at the din they are making on the other side of the Channel. Will you believe that I have just received a letter from a Member of the House of Commons, asking me seriously if the armaments we are preparing are destined for a war with England, and if we are pushing this constant augmentation of the forces of the two nations in a spirit of rivalry! I send you the letter, that you may not doubt my veracity. Will you answer it, or shall I?

"Our armaments! forsooth. What does it mean? You know as well as I that to this day we have not armed a poor little boat beyond our ordinary fleet. With a budget reduced by forty millions (francs) compared with the budgets of Louis Philippe, we are obliged to confine ourselves within the narrowest limits.

"England increases her budget of this year by sixteen millions (francs); she forms her militia; she recruits her sailors; she makes her coasts bristle with heavy artillery. We look on tranquilly, without comprehending all these efforts, and without having for a single instant the idea or the apprehension that she is going to invade us.

"Mr. Ewart asks me in confidence, and whispering in my ear, if we are actuated by sentiments of rivalry in pushing our armaments! I declare that I cannot understand it. We have not armed one vessel, we have not touched one gun, we have not equipped one soldier, we have not recruited one cabin-boy: and they ask us seriously if we are a very thunderbolt of war? It seems to me, that the question might be more seasonably addressed to the members of the English Cabinet, who are covering themselves with armour, and *who possibly may not be very much distressed by these imaginary terrors* (*as we have sometimes seen among ourselves*), *inasmuch as they enable them to swell their budget, and serve to strengthen a somewhat uncertain majority in Parliament.*

"Ah! my dear colleague, you see that all the geese do not come from the United States, or swim in the Seine. You perceive that the question from London makes me quite merry. Forgive me, my dear colleague. I conclude by asking whether I must write to Mr. Ewart, and tell him, for his great satisfaction, that I am a greater friend to peace than himself, and that I look upon war between France and England as a universal calamity, which every wise man ought to exert himself to prevent.

"Theodore Ducos."

But this excellent attempt of Mr. Ewart to allay the public excitement produced no apparent effect. Nothing could surpass the child-like simplicity with which any of the above absurd and improbable rumours respecting the hostile preparations of the French were believed, unless it was the stolid scepticism with which all offers to demonstrate their falsehood were rejected.

It will be well to turn for an instant to the tables in the first page, and bring the question of the state of the French navy at this time to the test of those authentic figures. Let us take the specific allegation in the *Annual Register* for 1852 (Sept. 21),

that during the two years of the Prince President's power, the French navy was doubled in effective force. Louis Napoleon was declared President of the Republic on the 20th December, 1848, and was proclaimed Emperor on the 2nd December, 1852. His term of presidency may therefore be said to have extended over the years 1849, 1850, 1851, and 1852. The following figures give the total expenditure, the amount of wages in dockyards, the number of seamen, and the number of ships in commission, for each of those years, and also for the two preceding years, 1847 being the last year of Louis Philippe's reign, and 1848 the first year of the Republic :—

	Wages in Dockyards. £	Total Expenditure. £	No. of Seamen.	No. of Ships in Commission.
1847 . .	448,333	5,145,900	32,169	240
1848 . .	444,085	4,985,872	28,760	242
1849 . .	456,155	3,923,276	27,063	211
1850 . .	432,837	3,406,866	24,679	181
1851 . .	416,773	3,293,737	22,316	166
1852 . .	425,811	3,462,271	25,016	175

Taking 1851, the third year of the presidency of Louis Napoleon, when it will be admitted his policy must have had time to develop itself, and comparing it with the sixteen previous years comprised in the table given in the first page, it will be seen that there is only one year (1835) when France had so few ships in commission, only two years (1835-6) in which she maintained so few seamen, and only five years (1835-6-7-8-9) when the total expenditure had been so low. And, instead of the effective force being doubled, it will be seen that a continual reduction had been going on during the first three years of the President's rule, with only an insignificant rise in 1852. The diminution in the dockyard expenditure was, in both countries, proportionately less than in the other items, owing to the more costly nature of the new naval constructions.

If we take the average of the four years, 1849 to 1852, it will be found to be very much less than the average of the last ten years of Louis Philippe's reign, and in looking back over the tables of both countries for the whole period, it will be found

that scarcely at any time was the French navy so weak in comparison with that of England, as in 1851. M. Ducos, in the above private letter to his colleague, asserts that his expenditure was forty millions (£1,600,000) less than that of his predecessor in the time of Louis Philippe; and if we compare the year 1852 with that of 1847, it more than verifies his statement.

It is now very well known, apart from the proofs afforded by these figures, that, owing to the embarrassed state of the French finances during the Republic, and the struggle, involving the very existence of social order, then going on, very little attention was paid to the Navy. A Parliamentary Commission, of which M. Dufaure was named "Reporter," was appointed by the National Assembly in 1849, to inquire into the state of the navy, and two goodly quarto volumes were the result, with minutes of the evidence and the discussions; but its proceedings were brought to an untimely end by the *coup d'etat* of the 2nd December, 1851, and they led to but few practical results.

It was under circumstances so little calculated to provoke our fear or resentment, that the cry of alarm and defiance was raised more loudly than ever through the winter and spring of 1852-3. Men of the highest political and social rank resigned themselves to the excitement. Two cabinet ministers, who had gone to their constituents for re-election on taking office in Lord Aberdeen's government, were afterwards called upon by their opponents in the House, to explain the violent language uttered by them at the hustings in allusion to the ruler and people of France.*

"I tell you," said the Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire, addressing the militia of that county, "the time is coming when everybody throughout this realm will have reason to be thankful that you have come forward to defend your hearths and homes."†

Lord Mount-Edgcumbe, through the columns of a public journal, thus added fuel to the flame:—"I have received positive information, which cannot be doubted, that the French are

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* *Hansard*, cxxiv. 267. † *Hansard*, cxxiv. 293 quoted.

now striving to the very utmost to increase their naval force in every manner, and that arrangements have now been officially decided upon, to continue, year after year, similar exertions. I cannot give my authority, but trust that I shall be believed when I say that this information may be most thoroughly relied upon." And the writer adds, by way of emphasis, "I repeat, that the information I have received, of preparations, which can only be made for aggression, may be relied on."*

At the same time, the strictures of the leading journals assumed a more virulent tone towards the Chief of the French people. Such had been the withering influence of legislative restrictions and fiscal exactions upon the periodical press, that the publication of daily newspapers was restricted to the three capitals of the United Kingdom, and their circulation among twenty-six millions of people did not exceed, in the aggregate, sixty or seventy thousand copies daily. A monopoly of publicity was, indeed, virtually possessed by one London journal, whose conductors had thus the power of giving the impress of public opinion to whatever views they chose to espouse. The columns of this paper now teemed with the most violent denunciations of the French ruler, not unmixed with expressions of contempt for the people of France. One writer† of a series of impassioned invectives was betrayed into expressions not obscurely suggestive of assassination.

A reaction was at length produced in a quarter supposed to be peculiarly influenced by this journal. That part of the community most slow to enter upon any public movement, the merchants and bankers of London, convened a meeting by circular of those "who feel called upon at this time publicly to express their deep concern at witnessing the endeavours continually made to create and perpetuate feelings of mistrust, ill-will, and hostility between the inhabitants of the two great nations of England and France," and they took the unprecedented step of sending to the Emperor of the French a deputation of leading citizens, carrying with them an address bearing more than a thousand signatures.

On the meeting of Parliament, Mr. Disraeli took an oppor-

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* *Times*, February 7-12, 1853.

† Letters of "An Englishman," in the *Times*.

tunity of drawing attention to these manifestations of hatred and terror towards France, declaring that it was "extremely strange and startling, that, under such circumstances, an idea should have seemed to enter into almost every man's brain, and an expression into every man's mouth, that we are on the eve of a rupture with that country." And, alluding to the gross attacks that had been levelled at the ruler of France, he said:—"Remember, that all this time, while the French Government were quietly and diplomatically working with our Government for great objects of public benefit and advantage—that French Government was painted as corsairs and banditti,* watching to attack our coasts without the slightest provocation and without the slightest warning."†

Such was the state of feeling in the Spring of 1853. The nation had grown rich and prosperous with a rapidity beyond all precedent. Our exports had risen from £52,849,000 in 1848, to £98,933,000 in 1853, having nearly doubled in five years. History shows that such a condition of things is fruitful in national follies and crimes, of which war is but the greatest. The time is not yet, though it will come, when people will be able to bear the blessings of prosperity and liberty, with peace. Whilst it seemed only a question upon whom we should expend our exuberant forces,—whether on France or some other enemy,—we "drifted" into hostilities in an unexpected direction. The Turk was allowed to declare war for us against Russia, after we had agreed to the terms of peace offered for us on behalf of the latter country! Could this have happened amid the commercial depression and gloom of 1848?

The sudden change which was now to be witnessed in the temper of the public and the action of the Government was so

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* Take, as a specimen, the similitude of burglars, under which, when speaking of the danger of invasion, our brave and polished neighbours were described by a well-known writer of the day—a man of rank and a clergyman:—"When burglars are about, we examine the scullery and cellar windows; we try the fastenings of our doors, hang up bells to warn us, get dogs and police to watch for us, and go to bed in confidence that we are so prepared against an attack, that few are likely to attempt it."—S. G. O., in *Times* (*Hansard*, cxxiv. 290.)

† *Hansard*, cxxiv. 263.

unlooked for, and so utterly beyond all rational calculation, that it might be compared to the shifting of the view in a kaleidoscope. By way of bringing clearly, and in the fewest words, home to the reader's apprehension what took place, let us illustrate it by an individual case. Let us suppose an invalid to have been ordered, for the benefit of his health, to make the voyage to Australia and back. He left England in the month of February or March. The Militia was preparing for duty; the coasts and dockyards were being fortified; the navy, army, and artillery were all in course of augmentation; inspectors of artillery and cavalry were reported to be busy on the southern coasts: deputations from railway companies, it was said, had been waiting on the Admiralty and Ordnance to explain how rapidly the Commissariat and military stores could be transported from the Tower to Dover or Portsmouth; and the latest paragraph of news from the Continent was that our neighbours, on the other side of the Channel, were practising the embarkation and disembarkation of troops by night! He left home amidst all these alarms and preparations for a French invasion. After an absence of four or five months, during which time he had no opportunity of hearing more recent news from Europe, he steps on shore at Liverpool, and the first newspaper he sees informs him that the English and French fleets are lying side by side in Besika Bay. An impending naval engagement between the two powers is naturally the idea that first occurs to him; but glancing at the leading article of the journal, he learns that England and France have entered into an alliance, and that they are on the eve of commencing a sanguinary war against Russia!

Leaving our imaginary individual to recover from his surprise, it may naturally be inferred, that he would feel some misgivings as to the prudence of placing ourselves at the mercy of a Ruler whom he had so recently heard denounced as little better than a bandit and a pirate. It would have certainly required a much smaller effort of the imagination to have suspected a plot between our ally and the enemy, by which the two Emperors, having joined their forces at Sebastopol, taken our army captive, and destroyed our fleet, should have seized on Constantinople, and Egypt, and made a partition of Turkey,

than to have believed in the possibility of an invasion by an army of fifty or sixty thousand Frenchmen in a single night, without notice or provocation.

No such doubts, however, seem to have troubled the minds of our alarmists. They who had been the most vehement in their denunciations of the French Government, were now the strongest supporters of the Anglo-French alliance, and the loudest in clamouring for a war with Russsia ; and for the next five years no more was heard of a French invasion.

THE THIRD PANIC.

1859—1860—1861.

"We must have one more war with Russia for the independence and freedom of Europe, and, then, all will unite in favour of a reduction of armaments," was the language with which some friends of peace reconciled themselves to the Crimean war. They have since seen additions made to the permanent armed forces of Europe, equalling probably in numbers the armies engaged in the Crimean struggle. So true is the saying of Bastiat, that "the ogre, war, costs as much for his digestion as for his meals."

It was formerly said of us, that we were a warlike, but not a military nation. The Russian war has gone far to make us both.

At the close of the great French war, in 1815, there were not wanting members of the Whig aristocracy, and a phalanx of distinguished popular leaders, to call back the nation to its old maxims against large standing armies in time of peace; and who not only kept alive the jealousy of permanent camps and barracks, but opposed the formation even of clubs set apart exclusively for the "Services," and denounced the whole paraphernalia of a military organization. *They* did not accept war as the normal state of mankind; nor did *they*, discarding all reliance on the spirit and patriotism of the people, attempt to drill them like Russians or Austrians into mere warlike machines.* But at the termination of the Crimean war, the

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* The following is a specimen of the language in which our fathers were addressed by their great political leaders nearly half a century ago. And these were the sentiments of the Hollands, Miltons, Lansdownes, Tierneys, Broughams, Russells, and even the Grenvilles, and Wellesleys, of those days:—"In despotic countries, it may be necessary to maintain great armies as seminaries of warlike spirit. The mind, which in such wretched countries has no noble object to employ its powers, almost

governing powers of this country seemed to be possessed but of one idea,—how Englishmen could be drilled and disciplined into a state of constant readiness for future continental campaigns.

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necessarily sinks into languor and lethargy, when it is not roused to the destructive phrenzy of war. The show of war during peace, may be necessary to preserve the chief skill of the barbarian, and to keep up the only exalted feeling of the slave. The savage soon throws off habits of order; and the slave is ever prone to relapse into the natural cowardice of his debased condition. But in this mightiest of Free Communities, where no human faculty is suffered to lie dormant, and where habitual order, by co-operation, gives effect to the intense and incessant exertion of power, the struggles of honourable ambition, the fair contests of political party, the enterprizes of ingenious industry, the pursuits of elegant art, the fearless exercise of reason upon the most venerable opinions, and upon the acts of the highest authorities, the race of many for wealth, and of a few for power or fame, are abundantly sufficient to cultivate those powers, and to inspire those energies which, at the approach of war, submit to discipline, and quickly assume the forms of military science and genius. A free nation like ours, full of activity and boldness, and yet full of order, has all the elements and habits of an army, prepared by the happy frame of its society. We require no military establishments to nurse our martial spirit. It is our distinction, that we have ever proved ourselves in time of need, a nation of warriors, and that we never have been a people of soldiers. It is no refinement to say, that the national courage and intellect have acted with the more vigour on the approach of hostility, because we are not teazed and worried into petty activity; because a proud and serious people have not been degraded, in their own eyes, by acting their awkward part in holiday parade. Where arms are the national occupation, the intervals of peace are times of idleness, during which a part, at least, of the people must fit themselves for the general business, by exercising the talents and qualities which it requires. But where the pursuits of peace require the highest activity and the nature of the government calls forth the highest spirit, the whole people must always possess the materials and principles of a military character. Freemen are brave, because they rely on themselves. Liberty is our national point of honour. The pride of liberty is the spring of our national courage. The independent spirit, the high feeling of personal dignity, and the consequent sensibility to national honour, the true sources of that valour for which this nation has been renowned for ages, have been, in a great measure, created and preserved by their being accustomed to trust to themselves for defence against invasion from abroad or tyranny at home. If they lean on an army for safety, they will soon look to it with awe; and thus gradually lose those sentiments of self-respect and self-dependence, that pride of liberty which are the peculiar and the most solid defences of this country."—Sir James Macintosh, House of Commons, February 28, 1816.

Hence we have seen a military activity never before known in England in a time of peace, as witness the columns of the daily press, filled with "Military and Naval Intelligence." The object of those, who, by their rank and influence, have mainly contributed to produce this state of things, has not been concealed. "What I want to see," said Mr. Sidney Herbert, "is a military spirit pervading all classes of the community; but especially the influential and intelligent middle class. I believe the volunteer corps will effect that object to a large extent; and, therefore, if for that alone, I think they ought to be encouraged."* The consequence has been, not only an enormous increase of our military estimates, but such an outlay for permanent barracks and camps as to imply a complete abandonment, for the future, of our old habits and maxims as a self-relying and free people. The unfinished works at Aldershott alone, have already cost £1,421,153,†—an amount, for the time and purpose, perhaps unexampled in the world's history. Our business, however, must still be mainly with the navy.

At the conclusion of the war, a grand Naval Review took place at Spithead, which is thus recorded in the *Annual Register*, for 1856, with the accompanying remarks, that the "steam gun-boats formed the novel feature of the review."

"The vast naval force reviewed on this occasion, consisted of 22 steam-ships of the line, of from 60 to 131 guns, 53 frigates and corvettes, 140 gun-boats, 4 floating-batteries, and 50 mortar-vessels and mortar-boats: the aggregate power of the steam-engines, 30,671 horses, aud the number of guns, 3002."

Addressing the House, May 8, 1856, after the ratification of the Treaty of Peace, Lord Palmerston said, that, "having begun the war with a fleet of comparatively small amount, we were enabled, at the end of the war, to present at Spithead the spectacle of such a fleet as called forth from the Earl of Derby the eulogy, that 'no country ever possessed so mighty a naval armament.' We had, at the beginning of the war, a total force of 212 ships; and at the end of the war we have 590."‡

The greater portion of this increase consisted of gun-boats and mortar-vessels; and, with a view to a due appreciation of

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* *Hansard*, clv. p. 699. † *Parliamentary Paper*, No. 327, 1861.

‡ *Hansard*, cxli. p. 226.

the systematic manner in which they are destined henceforth to pass into oblivion, when successive "First Lords," or Secretaries of the Admiralty introduce the Navy Estimates, it is necessary that we should fully apprehend the importance which competent judges attached, at the time, to this addition to our defensive armament. A few weeks later, the First Lord of the Admiralty himself, when alluding to the fact of these gun-boats having been completed too late to be employed in offensive operations against the enemy, remarked :—

"Happily, however, the means thus provided for attack can now be made equally available as a part of our permanent establishment for purposes of defence. The gun-boats and floating-batteries, recently constructed for other objects, will constitute a valuable and effective armament for protecting our shores from assault. The expense incurred in their equipment will, therefore, be money not ill-spent. I think it required the stern experience of war to teach us the value of such a force; for I do not believe the House of Commons could have been induced, in a period of uninterrupted peace, to vote the additional funds requisite for creating it."*

"We commenced the war," said Captain Scobell, on the same occasion, "with only large ships; and it was only after two years' experience, that we discovered the gun-boat tribe. If, some time ago, we had had that magnificent fleet of gun-boats which had recently been reviewed at Spithead, something would have been done in the Baltic, which would have been remembered for centuries."†

Let it be borne in mind, that we were at the close of a war in which we had destroyed the Russian fleet in the Black Sea, and by the terms of the Treaty of Peace, had prohibited its reconstruction. The Russian power, in that remote region, had been hitherto invested with a certain mystery, and the fleet of Sebastopol had often, in the speeches of our alarmists, been made to assume mythical proportions. The Secretary of the Navy, in 1852, the year before the Crimean war, when seeking to justify his comparatively moderate expenditure for that year, appealed to the Russian force in the Black Sea, which, according to his statement, comprised 18 line-of-battle ships.

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* *Hansard*, cxlii. p. 1423. † *Hansard*, cxlii. 1435.

12 frigates and corvettes, and 19 smaller vessels.* These ships were now lying sunk in the harbour of Sebastopol.

It was under these circumstances, that in proposing the Navy Estimates, on the 18th May, 1857, the First Lord of the Admiralty declared, that he could hold out no prospect of being able to reduce the expenditure to the level of former years previous to the war.† This drew from the vigilant Mr. Williams the remark, that they were the most extravagant Estimates since the termination of the great French war; and he added that, "the Estimates for 1852-3, the last year of peace before the Russian war, were £2,175,000 less than the Estimates for the present year; and yet this was the second year of peace.‡

The First Lord of the Admiralty proceeded to justify his increased estimates by a reference to the navy of our ally and neighbour:—"France," said he, "had been paying the greatest possible attention of late years to the efficiency of its navy;"§ and in order to compare the forces of the two countries, he gave the numbers of screw line-of-battle ships and frigates possessed by each, omitting the gun-boats and smaller vessels, in which we possessed an overwhelming superiority, and which had been described the previous year, as "a valuable and effective armament for protecting our shores from assault." They were now alluded to only with the disparaging remark, that "no great naval engagement could be maintained in the middle of the Atlantic between line-of-battle ships and gun-boats." The comparison was stated as follows:— ‖

Line-of-battle ships with screws, built and building, 1857.

English, 42.	French, 40.

Frigates with screws, built and building.

English, 42.	French, 37.

Lord Clarence Paget, who attracted attention by the ability and professional forethought which characterised his remarks on

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* *Hansard*, cxx. p. 332. † *Hansard*, cxlv. p. 417,
‡ *Hansard*, cxlv. p. 442. § *Hansard*, cxlv. 418.
‖ *Hansard*, cxlv. 426.

the comparative value of small and large vessels of war, took exception to the above figures, and said that he held in his hand a list of French screw line-of-battle ships furnished him by the Minister of Marine, and that they amounted altogether to 31; and he reminded the "First Lord" of a great omission in his statement,—that the "nine screw block-ships which he had omitted from his enumeration of British ships of the line, were among the most effective of our screw line of battle ships. They were the only ships which fired a shot in the Baltic, where the great line-of-battle ships were of no use whatever, and lay off looking on;"* and he added, that, taking into account these vessels, our force was nearly double that of France.

It may be well here to say a word or two respecting the origin and purpose of these block-ships, to which repeated allusion will hereafter be made. It was explained by Sir George Cockburn in the House, in 1846, that Sir Robert Peel's Government was induced, in consequence of the creation of a steam navy by France, to appoint a commission to visit all the ports, and see what was necessary to be done for their protection, when it was recommended that a certain number of sailing line-of-battle ships and frigates should be furnished with screws, so as to be able to shift their position, and aid the different batteries if they should be attacked.† This was, in fact, our first application of the screw propeller to ships of the line, and these block-ships were expressly designed for the protection of our naval arsenals, and the vulnerable points of our coast against the steam ships of our neighbour. But it will be curious to observe, how systematically these vessels are ignored by successive "First Lords" and Secretaries of the Admiralty, in enumerating our naval resources, even when estimating our means of defence against invasion. The opinions expressed on this subject by the same statesmen when in, and when out of office, will be found to present a singular contrast.

Lord Clarence Paget also called the First Lord's attention to the small vessels which he had forgotten, and declared that "he believed, that had Sir Charles Napier been supplied with gunboats, he might have damaged Cronstadt very considerably. All his own experience went to show that line-of-battle ships

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* *Hansard*, cxlv. 438. † *Hansard*, lxxxvii. 1456.

were not now so important an arm in war as they formerly were. Formerly, line-of-battle ships carried heavier guns than other ships, but now every corvette, sloop, and gun-boat carried heavy guns, and he was convinced that no force of large ships could withstand the legion of gun-boats, sloops, and corvettes which they saw at Spithead last year."* Again recurring to the subject, he said, "in his opinion, line-of-battle ships were not the instruments by which in future the fate of empires would be decided;" and he proceeded to administer comfort to the alarmists, by showing how different our situation now was to our "case in the time of Napoleon, who had observed that, if he could only command the Channel for forty-eight hours, he would subjugate this country. He might, however, come to our shores at the present day with seventy or eighty ships of the line, and yet not be enabled to effect a landing in the face of that noble fleet of small vessels which the right-honourable baronet had given within the last few years." He added that, "he had the best authority for saying that there was sitting at the present moment in France, an *Enquête*, or Commission, the great object of whose inquiry was to ascertain whether line-of-battle ships were or were not the most efficient class of ships which could now be employed." And he advised the First Lord to "rest upon his oars, and take the opportunity of consulting members of the naval service before he proceeded to add to the number of those vessels;"†—advice to which unfortunately, it may be necessary to recur, when the noble lord is himself filling the office of official representative of the Admiralty in the House of Cummons.

In reply to these remarks, Sir Charles Wood, the First Lord of the Admiralty, observed:—"The noble lord (Lord C. Paget) had said that the block-ships were the most efficient ships in the Baltic. It was true that, on account of the light draught of water, they and the gun-boats were so in that case, *and that they would be so in the case of operations on our own coast;* but they would not be safe vessels to send across the Atlantic—they could not keep their place in a cruising squadron.‡

In the course of this debate, Sir Charles Napier, referring to

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* *Hansard*, cxlv. 438. † *Hansard*, cxlv. 438-9.

‡ *Hansard*, cxlv. 450.

the comparative numbers of line-of-battle ships as enumerated by the First Lord, but forgetting the block-ships and floating batteries, and overlooking the gun-boats and mortar-vessels which had been built at his own suggestion, thus raised the cry of alarm:—"The First Lord of the Admiralty," said he, "had told the House that France had forty ships, and we had forty-two only; France was equal to us, therefore, in ships, and superior in the means of manning them. She had an army of 300,000 or 400,000 men, and we had but 20,000 in Great Britain. What would the consequence be if the war were to spring up? Why, there would be an invasion immediately."*

A few days after, he thus improved upon this version of the official statement:—"The First Lord of the Admiralty had told them the other night—a thing which no First Lord had ever told them before—that France, in its naval steam power, was equal to ourselves, and that she was able to bring together any number of disciplined men to man her fleets quicker than we could. We were, therefore, no longer the first naval nation in the world."† A week later the danger is more menacing:—"Let the House look at our condition at the present moment. We had no channel fleet. In a few months we should not have a line-of-battle ship in England; and, in case of a sudden war with France and Russia, he did not believe the Queen's throne would be worth six months' purchase."‡

The course pursued by this remarkable man towards the close of his career, and the great extent to which his writings and speeches contributed to the creation of the invasion panics, call for a few special observations. On his return to the House of Commons, after being superseded in the command of the Baltic fleet during the Crimean war, he became possessed with a morbid apprehension, amounting almost to a state of monomania, respecting the threatening attitude of France, and our insufficient means of defence. It was not peculiar to his case, for it is common to all who share his delusion about the danger of an invasion, that he always lost sight of all that was already done, and called for something else as the sole means of security.

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* *Hansard*, cxlv. 434. † *Hansard*, cxlv. 770.
‡ *Hansard*, cxlv. 966.

Thus, he demanded more line-of-battle ships, and ignored the existence of the new force of small vessels; then he called for a channel fleet, whilst he threw contempt on the block-ships; when the channel fleet was completed, he declared that the crews were in mutiny from mismanagement; when the number of line-of-battle ships was so great as to extort from him expressions of satisfaction, he asked what was the use of ships without seamen; when the number of seamen voted for our royal navy exceeded that of the entire sea-going population of France, he called aloud for a reserve; and when he had been triumphant in all his demands, he reverted to the opinion which he had been one of the first to proclaim, that the whole navy must be reconstructed, for that "a broadside from the modern shell guns would tear holes in the sides of our wooden ships through which it would be easy to drive a wheel-barrow."*

Simultaneously with these calls for defensive armaments arose incessant cries respecting the enormous increase of the French navy. France was always described as in a superior state of preparation, and always menacing us with invasion. To those who sat near him in the House, and shared in his conversation, he would sometimes almost predict the very month when the French might be expected on our shores.

Cherbourg had been always described by him as the chief source of our danger, until the great public visit to that port dispelled the phantom-ships with which he had been haunted; but still he would expatiate on the facilities which its enormous docks and basins offered for embarking an army, declaring on one occasion that, "the troops could walk on board; *cavalry, mounted on their horses, could ride on board;* and artillery could easily be shipped, for thirty sail-of-the-line could lie alongside of the wharves alone."† Notwithstanding that he drew on himself occasionally the censure of his brother officers for disparaging our naval strength, and was more than once rebuked for encouraging insubordination among the seamen, he still persevered; and such is the force of reiteration, that he was at last justified in the boast that, although "he had been called an

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* *Hansard*, clvi. 1138. † *Hansard*, cl. 1928.

alarmist, and laughed at for many years on that account, he had lived to see his views adopted."*

The question has been asked, whether one whose antecedents had exhibited such reckless courage could have been sincere when raising the cry of alarm on such vague and shadowy pretexts, or whether he was actuated by mere professional motives. It was, however, impossible for those who were in the habit of conversing with him to doubt his earnestness; and the fact of his having recommended an arrangement between the English and French governments for putting a limit to their naval rivalry† is an answer to the suspicion of insincerity. The question admits, perhaps, of a different solution. On the occasion of his bringing his grievance before Parliament, and moving for an inquiry into his conduct in the Baltic, he was answered by Sir Maurice Berkeley, one of the Lords of the Admiralty, who stated, in his presence, that he had advised the removal of Admiral Napier from his command in the Baltic because "he thought he was totally and physically unfit,—that his nerves were completely gone."‡ This declaration, from sailor to sailor, was at the moment thought to partake of somewhat too much professional bluntness; but it probably offers the true solution of the above question. And this view is confirmed by the fact, that, to the last, on all matters connected with his profession, excepting where the question of invasion was involved, the remarks and suggestions of the naval veteran displayed much sagacity and sound sense.

Debility of mind, in one or other of its faculties, like physical decrepitude in some particular organs of the body, is the natural and inevitable accompaniment of old age. It has been observed, too, that, as in the present case, the very faculty for which a man has been most distinguished may, by an excessive and continued strain, be the first to give way. This, whilst teaching us charity in weighing men's motives, should also induce us, when taking counsel in important matters, to prefer the judgment of those who are in the vigour of their powers, and to mistrust quite as much the timidity of the old as the rashness of the young.

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* *Hansard*, clvi. 989. † *Hansard*, clvi. 989.

‡ *Hansard*, cxli. 102.

The year 1857 passed without any revival of the excitement out of doors respecting our defences. Scarcely a pamphlet issued from the press on the subject of an invasion. Yet, if we look at the circumstances of the time, there could hardly be imagined a conjuncture when they who believed in the probability of an attack from the other side of the Channel ought to have been more on the alert.

The commencement of 1858 found us involved in a war with China, and in the midst of that formidable rebellion which threatened the overthrow of our dominion in India. Just at the opening of the parliamentary session of that year, occurred the attempt on the Emperor's life, which led to some intemperate manifestations of feeling towards England on the part of certain French colonels. This was followed by irritating discussions in the press. One of the first measures of the session was a proposal to alter our law of "conspiracy to murder," with the view of meeting the complaints from France. This conciliatory step led to the fall of Lord Palmerston's ministry in February, and to the return to power of Lord Derby, whose party was at that time considered not so favourably disposed as their predecessors to the French alliance. When we consider that, in addition to these personal elements of provocation, there was the temptation to wrest from us that eastern empire which is regarded, however mistakenly, on the Continent, as the great source of our wealth and power, we have a combination of motives, and of favourable circumstances, to invite an attack such as could never be expected to occur again. Well might Mr. Horsman exclaim the following year, that, "when he looked back to their condition when the mutiny broke out in India, he must say it was fortunate that at that time it never entered into the mind of any enemy to take advantage of the position of this country:"*—what marvel that so intelligent a mind could fail to draw the only rational deduction from such a fact! Instead of taking advantage of our position, the Emperor's Government offered the facilities of a passage through France for our Indian reinforcements.

A complete calm prevailed in the public mind, through the greater part of the year 1858; and the pamphlet literature

* *Hansard*, clv. 691.

scarcely takes note of the topic of a French invasion. The House of Commons was not, however, so entirely quiescent. Lord Derby's Government, on their accession to office, had found the Navy Estimates already prepared by Lord Palmerston's administration, comprising an increase of about 2,000 men. These Estimates, with slight diminutions in the items for building and stores, were adopted and proposed to the House by the new First Lord (Sir John Pakington) on the 12th April. In the debate which followed, there was the usual reference made by Sir Charles Napier, Mr. Bentinck, Mr. Drummond, and others, to the formidable preparations going on in France, and to the risks of an invasion: when Lord Clarence Paget renewed the advice he had before urged, saying that, "he believed it to be the opinion of the Navy, that it would be wise to pause in the construction of these enormous vessels. That opinion was gaining ground in this country, and much more was it gaining ground in France. He had been lately at Paris, and had conversation with French officers on the subject; and, whatever reports the late First Lord of the Admiralty (Sir Charles Wood) might have heard respecting the French Navy, he could give him positive information, that, so far from there being any activity in building large ships, they were waiting to see what would be done in this country. He was persuaded, and it was the general opinion of the naval profession, that line-of-battle ships were not destined to play an important part in future naval wars. It was believed that these ships would be superseded in the line of battle, and more particularly in attacking forts, by ships with one tier of heavy guns, and their sides cased with iron. He believed with the hon. and gallant Admiral, the member for Southwark (Sir C. Napier), that in ten years three-deckers would be unknown, being cut down into single-deck ships; and, holding that opinion, he thought it was a wasteful expenditure of the public money, to go on, year by year, constructing that class of vessels."*

These views were controverted by Lord Palmerston, who alluded to the measures which the French Government were taking to give France a fleet of screw line-of-battle ships, very

* *Hansard*, cxlix. p. 929, 30.

nearly equal to our own; he also spoke of Cherbourg as being "as large as many of our dockyards taken together;" and twitted Lord Clarence Paget with his credulity, telling him that he was "not sure that opinions, coming from what must be called the rival service of other countries were exactly the opinions by which the Government of this country ought to guide their conduct."* He deprecated any reduction in the Estimates for building; and urged, that, "the most pressing application of the funds voted for the naval service, was in providing ships which, when once built, will remain, rather than in employing men, who, after the year is over, will not add to your strength next year, unless the expense is continued:" †—a doctrine which, as the recent transitions in our navy show, ought to be received with great caution.

These allusions to the preparations of our neighbours met with no response out of doors; and little more was said during the session,—with one constant exception:—Sir Charles Napier, on the 11th June, addressed a speech to the House, in the form of a long question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the subject of our national defences, in which, among other terrors of the imagination, he pictured a Russian fleet coming up the Channel, and exclaimed, amid the laughter of the House, "what would become of the Funds, God only knew."‡ The Minister, in reply, complained that he had had to listen to three speeches in the session, on the same subject, from the same speaker.

The year 1859 witnessed the apparition of the third panic. Towards the close of 1858, and up to the meeting of Parliament in February, there had been some efforts made by a certain portion of the press, to excite apprehensions respecting the magnitude of the naval preparations of France; but they produced little effect on the public mind. Unlike its predecessors, this panic had its origin chefly in elevated and official circles. It was from the first a parliamentary agitation; nor was it confined to the Lower House, for, as will be seen, the most successful agitators were of the patrician order, who played with consummate skill on the most sensitive chord

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* *Hansard*, cxlix. p. 936. † *Hansard*, ib. p. 938.

‡ *Hansard*, cl. p. 1930.

in the national heart, by raising the cry of alarm for our naval superiority.

The Queen's Speech, at the opening of Parliament, announced an increase of expenditure for the "reconstruction of the British Navy."

On the day previous to that fixed for bringing on the Navy Estimates, Sir Charles Napier rose in the House, and said, he "wished to ask the First Lord of the Admiralty, whether it was true that a French steam *aviso*, with two French cutters, had entered Spithead a few nights ago; and, after the exchange of a few words of courtesy, these vessels had proceeded to Stokes Bay in the night, and had taken soundings there? Also, whether he knew that these vessels had more than the usual complement of officers?"* The reply, of course, was that they were employed in the performance of their duty, in looking after the French fishermen.

Before we come to the proposal for a sudden and large increase of the Navy, on the plea that the Government had discovered, in the summer of 1858, that the French were making extraordinary progress in their naval armaments, it will be well to recur for a moment to the tables in the first page. The following is an extract of the number of men, the amount of wages in dockyards, and the total expenditure for the Navy in England and France, for the year 1858:—

	Seamen.	Wages, etc., Dockyards.	Total Expenditure.	
		£	£	
England . .	55,883	991,592	10,029,047	1858
France . . .	29,602	640,954	5,337,060	1858

It will be seen, that our total expenditure amounted to nearly double that of France; but, owing to the difference in the modes of keeping the accounts in the two countries, as already explained, this is not a fair mode of comparison. The amount expended for wages in dockyards is a better test; and under this head, the English expenditure is fifty per cent. more than that of France. But the truest standard of comparison is the number of seamen, in which we had nearly double the French force. If we cast our eye back over the French tables, we

* *Hansard*, cliii. p. 771.

shall find that the number of men maintained in 1847, the last year of the reign of Louis Philippe, amounted to 32,169, or 2,567 more than in 1858. The average number of the French Navy for the last ten years of Louis Philippe's reign, was 31,335, or 1,733 more than in 1858. It will be seen, also, that the number of ships in commission, in the latter years of the monarchy, exceeded those of 1858. On the other hand, looking back over the British accounts, we shall find no year, previous to the Crimean war, in which our seamen approached within 10,000 of the number voted for 1858. And, more important than all, it will be seen that during the whole preceding period of twenty-three years, the number of our seamen had never been so much in excess of those of France as in 1858.

The above statement is more than confirmed by an official document, which was in the hands of the "First Lord," when he brought forward his Estimates, but which was not laid on the table of the House until the following April. It is entitled, "Report of a Committee, appointed by the Treasury, to enquire into the Navy Estimates, from 1852 to 1858, and into the Comparative State of the Navies of England and France." In this document, it is said, that, "France founds her calculations upon a return to her peace establishment of 1852; the number of her ships in commission for 1859 being 152 against 175 in the year 1852; and the number of seamen afloat being 25,784, against 25,016, in 1852." This gives an increase of 768 men. The Report then proceeds to give a corresponding comparison of the British Navy:—"Our position is very different. On the 1st of December, 1858, our ships in commission, and their complements, as compared with 1852, were as follows:—

	Ships.	Guns.	Seamen.
1st December, 1858	267	4649	47,953
1st December, 1852	203	3584	36,372
Increase.	64	1065	11,581

This number is exclusive of a further increase of 3,302 marines on shore, including 1,800 employed on shore in China; also of 3,880 seamen, employed in the coast-guard on shore; making a total increase, in 1858, as compared with 1852, of

18,763 seamen and marines."* Thus, it appears from our own official Report, that whilst France had added to her force, afloat, in six years, 768 men, we had added to ours, afloat and on shore, 18,763; and that whilst, on the 1st December, 1858, the navy of England numbered 55,135 men, that of France, afloat, contained only 25,784, or considerably less than one-half. When viewed by the light of these facts, the tone of excitement and alarm which pervades the following statement becomes simply incomprehensible.

On the 25th February, 1859, the Navy Estimates were brought forward by the First Lord of the Admiralty (Sir John Pakington), who asked for an addition of £1,200,000 for ship-building, and proposed a vote of 62,400 men and boys, being the largest number ever maintained in a time of peace. He stated, that when he succeeded to office, he "did not find the navy of this country in a proper and adequate state for the defence of our coasts, and the protection of our commerce"; he invited the House to "aid him in his attempt to restore the naval supremacy of England"; spoke of our having "fallen to the lowest amount ever known in our history—an amount not exceeding that of a neighbouring power, (!) without anything like the same demand upon its force";† he pleaded "the present aspect of public affairs" in justification of his proposal, alleging that, "the Government would not have done their duty to the country, if they had not boldly asked for the increase of force."‡

But, not confining himself to these generalities, he stated that during the summer the Government had thought it their duty to ascertain the state of the French navy. They had heard much of the progress made by France in increasing her naval armament during the last few years, and having taken means for ascertaining the facts, they had found that the line-of-battle ships in France were exactly the same in number as our own, namely twenty-nine. He calculated that, at the progress then making, France would, at the end of the year 1859, have forty§ line-of-battle ships, and England only thirty-six.

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* *Parliamentary Paper*. No. 182. 1859, p. 22.

† *Hansard*, clii. p. 882—912. ‡ *Hansard*, ib.

§ On the 11th April, 1861, more than two years later, we shall find Lord Clarence Paget, then Secretary of the Admiralty, stating in the

When this was brought under his notice in July, he consulted his colleagues, and they determined that it "was a state of things which could not be allowed to continue"; and they resolved immediately to withdraw sufficient workmen from other occupations to convert four sailing line-of-battle ships into screws, and he now proposed to the House that five additional liners should be forthwith converted.* At the same time, he entered into a similar statement respecting frigates, in which he was sorry to say that our position was, in comparison, still more unsatisfactory; and that in the course of the autumn, he had found that whilst we were in possession of thirty-four of these vessels, France had forty-six.†

Now, it was not this statement in itself—incomplete and inaccurate as it will be shown to be—so much as the manner of making it, which tended to produce the subsequent alarm and panic. A tone of mysterious revelation pervaded the speech, the effect of which was heightened by repeated protestations of frankness; whilst a portentous significance was imparted to the proposed naval augmentations by such assertions as, that "it was inconsistent with our naval power, and with our national safety and dignity, that we should allow such a state of things to continue,"‡ and still more by the solemn adjurations which followed, invoking the Anglo-French alliance, "for the sake of England and for the sake of the world." And yet, in fact, there was no secret to reveal, for the French Government had, in 1857, published to the whole world the programme of its future naval constructions for a period of thirteen years, founded on the report of a commission appointed in 1855. "The 'First Lord' and his coadjutors," says the author of a volume containing much valuable information, when commenting on this speech, "had only discovered six months previously what was long before patent enough to anyone who had taken the trouble to investigate the subject."§ The House of Commons, however, offered no opposition when the "First Lord"

House that France had only thirty-seven screw line-of-battle ships built and building.—*Hansard*, clxii. 442.

* *Hansard*, clii. 882-912. † *Hansard*, clii. 908. ‡ *Hansard*, ib. 906.

§ "*The Navies of the World*," by HANS BUSK, p. 85.

finally announced his intention to add twenty-six men-of-war to the navy in one year.*

This speech furnished arguments for the following twelve-months to those who were employed in exciting the invasion panic. The statement which was most frequently quoted, and became the favourite text for the alarmists, was that which placed England and France on an equality of twenty-nine line-of-battle ships each. This was arrived at by a departure from the invariable mode of comparison, by which the ships built and building are taken into account. On referring back to the comparative numbers of these vessels given by Sir Charles Wood on the 18th May, 1857, it will be seen, that he states the English at forty-two, and the French at forty.† They are now reduced to twenty-nine each, by taking only the numbers actually completed at the moment. Had the comparison been made in the usual manner, it would have stood as follows, according to the Parliamentary paper in the "First Lord's" hands‡ :—

Line-of-Battle Ships built and building, December, 1858.

	English.	French.
Complete, hull and machinery . .	29	29
Receiving engines	4	2
Converting	7	4
Building	10	5
Total	50	40

Adding the nine coast-guard blockships to the English column, it gives fifty-nine, to forty French.

The total omission of the coast-guard vessels from the "First Lord's" numerical statement of the line-of-battle ships and frigates possessed by the two countries calls for a few words of remark. It has been already shown that nine line-of-battle ships have been set apart for the protection of our arsenals and harbours. They mount, in the aggregate, about 600 guns, each vessel being "armed with 8-inch shell guns

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* *Hansard*, clii. 942. † *Ante*, p. 44.

‡ *Parliamentary Paper*, 182, 1859, p. 15.

and 32-pounders, together with two 68-pounders and four 10-inch shell guns."*

These vessels are assigned to particular stations on the coast, though occasionally a paragraph in the newspapers informs us that they are mustered as a squadron in the Channel.† But wherever they may be, it will be found, on turning over the pages of the Navy List, and referring to the "Majestic," "Blenheim," "Cornwallis," etc., that these block-ships carry their full complement of captain, lieutenants, chaplain, staff surgeon, paymasters, engineers, etc.; and we are told that crews of picked seamen, the veterans of the fleet, are provided for them. Yet these vessels, with their satellite fleet of gun-boats, are left altogether out of the numerical comparison of the English and French navies; they are not counted as line-of-battle ships, or even thrown into the scale to weigh against our neighbour's paddle frigates!

Now, if it could be shown that these ships are worthless, as some of our officials would seem to imply, what must be thought of the wisdom of those who incur from year to year all the current expenses of officering, manning, and arming in the most efficient manner, vessels which are afterwards to count for nothing! The French form a very different estimate of the value of our coast-guard fleet, as the following extract from a

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* Paper read at the Society of Arts, by Mr. E. J. Reed, late of H. M.'s Dockyard, Portsmouth, 15th Dec., 1858, p. 15.

† The Blockships.—Commodore Yelverton's fleet of coastguard block-ships, consisting of the Majestic, 80, Capt. Mends, C. B.; Blenheim, 60, Capt. Tatham; Cornwallis, 60, Capt. Randolph; Edinburgh, 60, Capt. D'Eyncourt; Hawke, 60, Capt. Crispin; Hogue, 60, Capt. Macdonald; Russell, 60, Capt. Wodehouse; Ajax, 60, Capt. Boyd; and the screw steam-frigate Dauntless, 34, Capt. Heath, C.B., after being duly inspected, as previously announced, by Admiral Eden and Capt. Frederick, two of the Lords of the Admiralty, left Portland harbour on Wednesday and Thursday for their respective stations. The Colossus, 80, Capt. Scott, C.B., still bearing the flag of Commodore Yelverton, remains at anchor in that harbour, but is expected to leave for the Isle of Wight in a day or two. The Biter gunboat, tender to the Colossus, is also at Portland.—*Times.*

The Channel fleet of blockships were observed at Plymouth at noon on Sunday, approaching from the eastward. At five p.m. they were near the Eddystone, going down Channel under three foresails, jib, and spanker. Wind, north-west. Eleven ships in all; one a frigate.—*Herald.*

work published under the sanction of their Government will show*:—

"The service of the coast-guard is placed under the general direction of a Commodore of the first class, having the 'Pembroke' for his flag-ship. It includes seventy-three vessels, twenty-seven of which are steamers, and forty-six sailing vessels. All the coast has been divided into eleven districts, each commanded by a captain, having under his orders a certain number of officers;—this staff amounts altogether to more than 250 officers of all grades. Nine ships-of-the-line and two frigates watch the eleven districts. With the exception of one, all these vessels are mixed, that is, old sailing vessels, having had machinery adapted to them; their armaments and masts have been reduced, so as to diminish their draft, and render them more manageable. The ships-of-the-line have sixty guns, the frigates fifty. Sixteen steam gun-boats and forty-seven vessels of light draft have been distributed between the eleven districts. It is quite a fleet, destined to a special service, and on board of which the manœuvres and the gun practice take place as regularly as on board of other vessels of war. The blockships offer to England, for the defence of her harbours and dockyards, means of defence which are entirely wanting in France."

It was by the total omission of this powerful fleet, in the enumeration of the forces of the two countries, that the statement of the First Lord startled the country, and furnished the "cry" to the alarmists—the echo of which has hardly yet died away—that France was our equal in line-of-battle ships, and was aiming at the supremacy of the seas.

The comparison of the number of frigates possessed by the two countries was hardly less fallacious than that of the ships of the line. In stating that England possessed fewer of these vessels than France, the faintest possible allusion was made to the immense superiority in tonnage and horse-power of the majority of our frigates; whilst the numerical comparison alone reached the eye of the general public. The French Navy List

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* "*The Army and Navy Budgets of France and England*," by M. Cucheval Clarigny, p. 67.

contains fifteen vessels classed as paddle-frigates, which were built nearly twenty years ago for the transatlantic packet service, and on the failure of that enterprise were transferred to the Government navy in 1844-5.* The very age of these vessels renders it unnecessary to speak of their quality. They carry sixteen guns, and, for comparison, they are put on an equality with our screw frigates of forty or fifty guns, some of which are of a larger tonnage than the line-of-battle ships of half a century ago! And whilst these antique tubs are thus paraded to the terror of Englishmen, no credit is taken for our own splendid packet ships, which would be available, in case of emergency, in a few weeks, and some of which, as the Persia, for example, are more than double the tonnage, and of far greater speed, than these converted "frigates" of the French navy.

But the gravest fallacy in the First Lord's statement has still to be noticed. Why was the comparison restricted to ships of the line and frigates? The old nomenclature no longer serves for an accurate definition of the strength of ships of war. We had at the time fourteen vessels called screw-corvettes, of from 20 to 22 guns each, in our Navy list, far more powerful than the above 16-gun frigates, whilst the French had only two of this class; and we had a dozen screw-sloops, of from 12 to 17 guns, of which the French had none; but these vessels were wholly kept out of view. Had the comparison been extended to all steam vessels, we should have shown an overwhelming superiority in these smaller ships, which were the pride of the Spithead Review, and had extorted so many eulogies from professional men. The "First Lord" did not omit to offer a passing compliment to this portion of our navy; but he found no place for it in his numerical comparison of the forces of the two nations, and it was this numerical comparison which was seized upon to promote the panic out of doors. The

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* "France had, about the close of 1844, grafted into their navy twenty or twenty-two ships, varying from 1500 to 1700 tons, and about 450 horse power. Those ships had been built for Transatlantic packets."—*Evidence of Sir Thomas Hastings before Committee on "Army, Navy, and Ordnance,"* 1848, Qu. 9797.

following figures, taken from the Parliamentary Paper* to which attention has been already called, will show what the comparison would have been if it had embraced the smaller vessels:—England had eighty-two corvettes and sloops, and France twenty-two: England had 162 gunboats, and France twenty-eight. If, after comparing the line-of-battle ships and frigates, there had been a comparison of the whole of the other steam vessels, the result would have been 380 English and 174 French.

The fact of our having built so many more small vessels than the French will partly, but not wholly, account for our not possessing a larger proportion of screw line-of-battle ships. England had, for a long series of years, been spending, at the very least, fifty per cent. more on the effective of her navy than France, and this ought to be a sufficient answer to the assertion that France had been aiming at an equality with us at sea. We build ships, construct steam-engines and machinery, and obtain coals and other stores twenty or thirty per cent. cheaper than our neighbours, and we ought, therefore, to secure a proportionately larger return for our outlay.† *But these advantages are more than counterbalanced by the superior management of the naval department in France, by which they are enabled to avoid the waste of money which is always going on in this country upon unnecessary and useless constructions.* This will be illustrated by a brief examination of the valuable parliamentary document to which reference has already been repeatedly made.

It was stated to the House by the First Lord of the Admiralty, that a Confidential Committee had been appointed in the winter of 1858, by Lord Derby's Government, to inquire into the comparative state of the navies of England and France. The Report of this Committee, dated January 6th, 1859, and

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* *Parliamentary Paper*, 182, 1859.

† The late Mr. Sidney Herbert, who had been three years Secretary to the Admiralty, in his evidence before the Select Committee on the Navy, in 1848, said, "I should never dream of instituting a comparison between our expenditure and that of France; because their expenditure is so lavish, and the result for the money spent so very small, that you cannot institute a comparison between them."— Q. 10126.

intended, originally, for the eye of the Ministry only, was laid on the table of the House on the 3rd April following. The inquiry extended from 1852 to 1858. The reader may be reminded that Lord Derby's Administration was succeeded by that of Lord Aberdeen in the autumn of 1852; and that on the fall of Lord Palmerston's ministry, in February, 1858, the Conservative Chief again returned to power. The Report embraces this interval, and is, therefore, an inquiry instituted by one body of politicians, into the management of the navy during nearly six years by their opponents; and it would not imply any great ignorance of the inner play of party, to suppose that, under such circumstances, we might find some hints or disclosures, which would not be met with in a Report of one of the ordinary Commissions appointed by a Government to inquire into its own conduct. It is difficult to believe, that, if this document had been in the hands of members of Parliament before the "First Lord" had made his statement on the 25th February, they would have allowed their attention to be diverted across the Channel to the acts of a neighbouring government, instead of being directed towards their naval administration at home.

Shortly previous to 1852, the English and French Governments had been brought to the conviction that sailing ships of the line could no longer be depended on for purposes of war; and after the experience of the Crimean campaign, they ceased to be taken into account in a comparison of the forces of the two countries. From 1852, to 1858, was, therefore, a period of transition, from a sailing to a steam fleet. In 1852, England had 73 sailing-vessels of the line; and France, 45.* In 1859, the country was startled with the "First Lord's" statement, that France had 29 screw liners, whilst England possessed only the same number. How did this arise? The Report, after giving a mass of most valuable facts and statistics, goes straight to the point, and states, that, "the large increase of the French steam navy, since 1852, in line-of-battle ships and frigates, has been effected mainly by the conversion of sailing ships"; that "the number of men required to convert a three-decker into a 90-gun steam-ship is stated to be five-eighths of the number

* *Parliamentary Paper.* No. 182. 1859. p. 18.

required to build a new 90-gun steam-ship. The chief difference in the cost of conversion arises from the saving in materials. The cost of converting a line-of-battle ship of 90 guns, is estimated at £25,000, and the cost of building the same, at £105,000; but the latter will, of course, be a far more efficient and durable vessel"; that, "the process of conversion, on the other hand, is speedy as compared with that of building. The present seems a state of transition, as regards naval architecture, inducing the French Government to suspend the laying down of new ships of the line altogether, and it is more especially so with respect to artillery."* The Report states, that, "*no line-of-battle ship has been laid down since* 1855, *in France, and there has not been a single three-decker on the stocks since that year*"; and that of the forty-five sailing vessels, which France possessed in 1852, and of which ten remained in 1858, there were two only which were not "too old to be converted."†

In the mean time, England had pursued the double process of building new, and converting old ships of the line. Between 1852, and 1858, we launched twenty-three liners. "Of the line-of-battle ships now building in the English dockyards," says the Report, "one was laid down in 1855, two in 1856, one in 1857, and four in 1858."‡ At the time when these last four were laid down, we had thirty-five sailing-ships of the line afloat, of which nineteen are reported by the Surveyor of the Navy to be convertible into screw liners or frigates; he states, also, that we possessed seventy sailing frigates, of which twenty-seven were convertible.§

Now, inasmuch as the fitting of steam-engines into existing sailing-ships is a much cheaper and more expeditious process than the building of new ones, and leaving sailing vessels to rot in ordinary, it was only natural that the conversion of a sailing into a steam fleet should proceed more rapidly in the French than in the English dockyards. The obvious remedy was to follow the thrifty example of our neighbours; and this was the recommendation of the Report, which, in language sufficiently intelligible, contrived, at the same time, to convey a censure on the conduct of the previous administration: — "We, therefore, venture to suggest, for your Lordships' consideration, whether,

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* *Parliamentary Paper*, p. 21. † *Ibid*, p. 19. ‡ *Ibid*, p. 19. § *Ibid*, p. 20.

if the force in the dockyards were to be used next year in the conversion of ships of the line and frigates, as far as the available dock accommodation will admit, the most useful results might not be attained at a comparatively small expenditure."*

We have seen, that, in conformity with this Report, the "First Lord" announced to the House his intention to convert nine sailing line-of-battle ships into screw steamers, and he reserved other four for the next year. If this had been done, as it should have been, at the time when the French were similarly employed, and if the nine Coast-guard vessels had been taken into account, where would have been the pretext for a panic? But, it is hardly reasonable to hold the French Government responsible for a state of things which arose out of the mal-administration of our own affairs, and which the Minister of Marine could have no power of remedying, except by lowering his management to the level of that of our Admiralty.

In order to illustrate the foregoing statement, the following figures are extracted from this Report.

As it has been the custom to estimate the strength of a navy by the number of its line-of-battle ships, it will be well, in the first place, to give the particulars of this class of vessels.

Comparative Numbers of English and French Line-of-battle Ships, in the Years 1852 *and* 1858.†

1852.

	English.
Sailing Vessels	73
Steam Vessels, afloat and building	17
Block Ships	4
Total	94

	French.
Sailing Vessels	45
Steam Vessels, afloat and building	6
Total	51

* *Parliamentary Paper*, 182, 1859, p. 21.

† *Ibid*, pp. 17—19.

1858.

			English.
Sailing Vessels			35
Steamers Complete	29		
,, Receiving Engines,	4		
,, Building	10		50
,, Converting	7		
Block Ships			9
Total			94

			French.
Sailing Vessels			10
Steamers Complete	29		
,, Receiving Engines,	2		
,, Building	5		40
,, Converting	4		
Total			50

It will be seen, by comparison, that, instead of our having lost ground in ships of the line in six years, the total number of French vessels, sailing and steam, bore a smaller proportion by one to the English, in 1858, than in 1852. As an illustration of the economical example which the Minister of Marine had given to our Admiralty, by the conversion of sailing-ships into steamers, it will be observed, that whilst France had reduced the number of her sailing vessels from forty-five to ten, or more than three-fourths, England had only diminished hers from seventy-three to thirty-five, or little more than one-half.

It should be always borne in view, that we are not discussing the process of creating a navy, but of substituting one kind of ship for another. The following list of the numbers of line-of-battle ships possessed by the two countries at various epochs is interesting, as showing the number of sailing vessels formerly maintained by France. It appears that the French force, as measured by this class of vessels, has generally been equal to rather more than the half of our own; and this seems to have been tacitly accepted by the two countries as a fair proportion for nearly a century, with the exception of that period of

humiliation for France, which immediately succeeded the restoration of the Bourbons.

Numbers of Line-of-Battle Ships in the English and French Navies at the following Dates:—

	British.	French.
1778	126	68
1794	145	77
1830	106	53
1840	89	44
1850	86	45
1858	94	50

The totals of the steamers of all sizes in the two navies were as follows in the years 1852 and 1858:—

1852 British Steamers of all sizes .	176
1858 „ „ .	464
British Increase	288
1852 French Steamers of all sizes .	122
1858 „ „ .	264
French Increase . . .	142

Thus, whilst in six years, the French added 142 steamers of all kinds to their navy, we added more than double the number to ours.

The following are the totals of both steamers and sailing vessels of all sizes in the two navies at the same dates:—

1852 British Steamers of all sizes .	176
„ „ Sailing vessels, ditto .	299
Total	475
1858 British Steamers of all sizes .	464
„ „ Sailing vessels, ditto .	296
Total	760
British Increase . .	285

1852	French Steamers of all sizes .	122
„	„ Sailing vessels, ditto .	258
	Total	380
1858	French Steamers of all sizes .	264
„	„ Sailing vessels, ditto .	144
	Total	408
	French Increase . .	28

It is very instructive to observe the above numbers of sailing vessels in the two countries at both periods. In 1852, England possessed 299 of these vessels, which were reduced to 296 in 1858, being a diminution of three only: France possessed 258 sailing vessels in 1852, which were reduced to 144 in 1858, being a diminution of 114. These figures show that whilst France was engaged in converting her sailing vessels into steamers, England continued the processes of building and converting; the consequence was that we had as many sailing vessels within 3 in 1858, as in 1852; and whilst France had increased the total number of her vessels, of all kinds, by 28 only, England had augmented hers by 285. That these figures* prove an enormous amount of misapplied capital and labour in our dockyards, and place us, in point of management, in humiliating contrast with our neighbour, there can be no doubt.

Sir Charles Wood, the preceding "First Lord," felt probably that some of Sir John Pakington's statements glanced obliquely upon him, and on the 6th April, he entered at length upon a vindication of his management. It is interesting to find him, in opposition, not only gathering up all the elements of our naval strength, including block-ships and gun-boats, which had been overlooked, when the Estimates were brought forward in 1857, but disputing the pretensions of our neighbours, who had received such flattering eulogies on that occasion. "I would, however," said he,† "remind the House that they must

* They have been wholly taken from the Report. *Parliamentary Paper.* No. 182. 1859.

† *Hansard*, cliii. p. 1462.

not suppose that all the French ships are as fine sea-going ships as our new line-of-battle ships. There is one of them, I know, the *Montebello*, which has only 140 horse-power; while the weakest of our block-ships* has 200 horse-power. I say, that for the defence of our coasts, at least, these block-ships are good and efficient, and as available for that service, as many of the French ships of the line are for attack. In considering our means of defence, I must, however, be allowed to take into account the numerous vessels of a smaller class, which we possessed, and which, as the noble member for Sandwich (Lord Clarence Paget) said, no line-of-battle ships could resist."

Here was an excellent case established against any additional armaments: but as the speaker gave a ready approval to the proposed increase of the Estimates, his argument was only calculated to inspire the public mind with still greater mistrust.

The better to understand the state of feeling in 1859, it is necessary to recur to the events which were then passing around us. Hostilities had commenced between France and Austria. The operations of the French army in Italy were watched with no friendly eye by the upper and conservative classes of this country, whose sympathies were generally on the side of Austria. On the contrary, with the mass of the people, the government of Vienna was supremely unpopular, whilst a universal enthusiasm prevailed in favour of Italian independence. And although, undoubtedly, some mistrust was

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* There is something almost dramatic in the transformation of opinion which is sometimes produced by the removal from the official to the opposition benches, and *vice versâ*. On the 18th May, 1857, Sir Charles Wood, the First Lord, in bringing forward the Navy Estimates, stated that France had forty and England forty-two screw-liners. On the 12th April, 1858, Sir John Pakington, who had just succeeded to the office of First Lord, alluding to this statement of his predecessor, said—"it was not fair to exclude the block-ships, as you must do when you say that you have only two line-of-battle ships more than the French." On the 25th February, 1859, Sir John Pakington, in moving his Navy Estimates, stated that France had twenty-nine, and England had twenty-nine screw line-of-battle ships, totally omitting the block-ships. On the 6th April following, Sir Charles Wood, then in opposition, reminded the First Lord of this omission, and contended that the block-ships were good and efficient for the defence of the coast.

entertained towards the absolute Ruler of France, in his new character of champion of the nationalities, still, for the sake of Italy, the popular sympathy followed the march of the French armies. At the same time, a suspicion arose (the despatches of Lord Malmesbury had not been published) that our Conservative government were pledging us to the side of the Austrians; and hence was witnessed the strange spectacle, for England, of public meetings called to proclaim the principle of non-intervention,—which, truly interpreted, meant a protest against the interference of our Government on the wrong side.

This explanation may help to account for the fact, that the loudest notes of alarm and hostility against France resounded from that usually serene and impassive body, the House of Lords. They did not avowedly espouse or defend the cause of Austria; public opinion was too strong in the opposite direction. But to proclaim the danger of an invasion of England, and thus rouse the hostile passions of the country against the French Emperor, operated, to some extent, as a diversion in favour of his antagonist; and he is said, by those who were in a position to be well-informed on the subject, to have been so far influenced by the hostile attitude manifested in high quarters in this country, that it operated, among other causes, disadvantageously to the Italian cause, in bringing the campaign to a precipitate close. The most inveterate alarmist might have rested satisfied, that, as the Emperor had allowed us to escape two years before, when we were involved in our Indian difficulty, he would not seek a rupture just at the moment when his own hands were so fully occupied in Italy. He knew that a war with England meant a campaign on the Rhine, as well as the Mincio, with British subsidies to Austria and Germany, and a naval war extending to every sea. Yet this was the fate to which, in the eyes of panic-struck peers, he was rushing, impelled—in the absence of every rational motive —by his destiny!

On the first of July, the Volunteer Corps and the Navy Estimates became the subjects of discussion in the Upper House. So much did the debate turn upon the question of invasion, that at the first glance, it might be concluded we were not only at war with our next neighbour, but at the very crisis of a long

struggle. Lord Ellenborough called for seventy line-of-battle ships, but declared that no increase of the Navy could, under present circumstances, protect us against invasion; that, for "six months in the year, an enemy may land 60,000 to 80,000 men on any beach on the south coast of England"; and with his wonted proneness to strategy, he called for forts to protect "all the ports, and all the roads in which it would be possible for an enemy to place a fleet, with any degree of security; and where he might form *têtes-de-pont* that would assist his future operations"; and he particularly pointed to Portland, "that port which the late French ambassador went down to reconnoitre, and which he took the trouble of visiting at the end of last summer in order to see the particular advantages it possessed. He trusted that whenever that respectable gentleman went to that port again, he would find it in a better position than when he saw it last."*

Lord Howden, who said "he resided in France, and his social relations were chiefly in that country," declared that the entire population of that empire were eager for the invasion of England, regardless of the consequences:—

"He did not believe that the idea of conquering this country had ever entered into the head of any sane Frenchman, any more than any sane Englishman had ever entertained the notion that we should allow ourselves to be conquered by France. He felt assured that no Frenchman had ever dreamt of taking possession of this island; but he felt almost equally certain that every Frenchman living dreamt both by day and by night of humiliating this country, and robbing her of the position which she alone maintained among the nations of Europe, that of possessing an inviolate soil. Thousands of persons in England scouted the very thought of an invasion. They asked, 'What is the use of it?—it could have no permanent result.' The people of France were aware that it could not; but then they did not adopt the same mode of reasoning on the subject. A forlorn hope might enter some miserable village, inhabited by six fishermen and a ploughboy; a bulletin might be signed on British soil, proclaiming the glorious triumph of French arms; the French eagles might stream from every steeple from

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* *Hansard*, cliv. 532.

Acton to Ealing, and from Ealing to Harrow—the very prospect was enough to throw every Frenchman into a transport of joy, and that, too, although he might be perfectly aware that not a single one of his countrymen would return home to tell the tale." He declared that a war against England would unite in one body, Republicans, Imperialists, Orleanists, and Legitimists, and in conclusion said:—"Such a war was the only one which would ever be universally popular in France, and, however reckless the attempt to invade England might be—however devoid of all rational hope of success—there was not a single widow in France who would not give her last son, or a single beggar who would not give his last penny to carry out such a project."* Lord Brougham controverted this view, and said he believed, on the contrary, that no act of the French Government could excite greater indignation among all classes of the French people than a quarrel with England. But he, too, called for increased preparations by land and sea.† Lord Hardwicke, with natural professional gallantry, would not listen to the plan of land defences, or tolerate the idea of an invasion; he was for carrying the war to the enemy's coasts:—"He held that it was the duty of the Government to render the navy of England sufficiently powerful not only to maintain the British Channel as the British Channel, but to enable us to insist that the boundaries of this country in that direction should be the low-water mark on the French shore."‡

But the great speech of the session on this subject, and which for a fortnight fluttered the fashionable world and agitated the clubs, has yet to be noticed. On the 5th July, Lord Lyndhurst brought forward the subject of the national defences. He began his argument by repeating the statement of the First Lord of the Admiralty, that "France exceeded us the year before in a small proportion in line-of-battle ships, but she exceeded us in an enormous proportion in steam frigates." Without one word of reference to the coast-guard fleet or floating batteries, or the small vessels, in which our superiority could be reckoned by hundreds, and which, as the naval authorities only two years before declared, rendered a landing on our shores impossible, or the scores of large ocean steamers in the employ of private

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* *Hansard*, cliv. 517. † *Hansard*, ib., 524.

‡ *Hansard*, ib., 528.

companies, he brings the two "fleets" into combat in the Channel, and argues, in case of defeat, that we have no reserve to prevent an immense military force from being landed on our shores. The "fleets" are brought also into collision in the Mediterranean and elsewhere; but no allusion is made to the existence of any other than ships-of-the-line and frigates. He cites Lord Palmerston's "very emphatic words, that steam has converted the Channel into a river, and thrown a bridge across it"; and he argues that "a large army may within a few hours —in the course of a single night—be landed on any part of our shores." "I know," said he, "from information which I have received, and the accuracy of which I do not doubt, that the French are at the present moment building steamers for the purpose of transporting troops, each of which is constructed to carry 2,500 men, with all the necessary stores. This, therefore, is the description of force which you must prepare yourselves to meet." He called for an establishment of 100,000 troops and embodied militia, and the same number of disembodied and trained militia, "in order to be prepared for any emergency which may arise." He avowed that he felt something like a sentiment of humiliation in going through these details. "I recollect," said he, "the day when every part of the opposite coast was blockaded by an English fleet. I remember the victory of Camperdown, and that of St. Vincent, won by Sir John Jervis; I do not forget the great victory of the Nile, nor, last of all, that triumphant fight at Trafalgar, which almost annihilated the navies of France and Spain. I contrast the position which we occupied at that period with that which we now hold. I recollect the expulsion of the French from Egypt; the achievement of victory after victory in Spain; the British army established in the south of France; and, last of all, that great victory by which that war was terminated." Interspersed with these irritating reminiscences were such remarks, as—"I will not consent to live in dependence on the friendship or forbearance of any country;" "are we to sit supine on our own shores, and not prepare the means necessary in case of war to resist that power?"*—remarks which, considering our overwhelming naval superiority at the time, can be compared only to the act of brandishing a weapon in the face of a friendly neighbour.

* *Hansard*, cliv. 617—27.

Fully to comprehend the scope and temper of these utterances, which were received by the assembled peers with a rapturous welcome, it is necessary to consider for a moment the circumstances under which the speech was delivered. The speaker represented more than any other peer the legal and constitutional character of the Upper House. His judicial mind and great age tended naturally to impart a tone of moderation and caution to his observations, and he was commenting on the policy of a nation with whom we were at peace, and from whose Sovereign our Government had received numerous proofs of friendship. Nor must the circumstances in which the two countries were at the moment placed be overlooked. France had hardly emerged from a war for an object in which the British nation had long felt the deepest sympathy, and for the outbreak of which the statesmen of both our political parties held Austria responsible, and she had incurred an exhaustive sacrifice of life and treasure which contributed, with other considerations, to bring the struggle to an early and unexpected close. At the same time, our own naval preparations were on a scale of unparalleled magnitude for a time of peace. Taking the average of the years 1858-9, it will be seen, on reference to the accounts in the first page, that the number of our seamen was more than double that of the French navy—a disproportion quite unexampled during the last thirty years. It was under these circumstances, and when not an act or word on the part of the French Government indicated a hostile disposition, that the foremost man in the highest assembly of Englishmen delivered, amidst enthusiastic plaudits, the speech of which the above is a brief outline. If England had been a weak country, threatened with invasion by a powerful enemy, nothing could have been more calculated to stir the patriotism of its inhabitants than to remind them of the exploits of their fathers; but to declaim of Trafalgar and the Nile, to taunt with their reverses a brave people who were no longer our enemies but our friends, was more derogatory to ourselves than to the object of those taunts. It must be acknowledged, that the dignified calmness with which such gratuitous insults as these have for many years been borne, bespeaks the possession of a large share of self-command on the part of our neighbours.

From the remarks which fell from other peers, it might have

been supposed that England was at the time completely disarmed. Forgetting our 464 steamers, our 62,400 seamen, the Militia Act of 1852, and the "very little short of 200,000 fighting men which, in the event of war, we could put into the field,"* Lord Ellenborough exclaimed—"My Lords, it is not safe for this country to remain unarmed in the midst of armed nations. When, of two neighbouring nations who have ever been rivals, and have often been engaged in desperate hostilities against each other, one determines to apply all her energies to making money, and the other to making preparations for war, it is obvious enough with which of the two nations all the money must ultimately remain."†

And Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, after expressing his gratitude to Lord Lyndhurst "for calling attention to this most important and solemn question at so anxious a time as the present," and reminding his hearers, that, "although the supplies necessary for taking the precautionary measures now suggested could not originate in that House, that, nevertheless, those measures had first been brought under consideration there," proceeded to remark on the unwillingness of free countries to prepare for defence in anticipation of war, and declared "that it was a just cause of shame and an intolerable humiliation, that a great empire like ours should appear, though it were only for one hour, to exist by sufferance, and at the good pleasure of a forbearing neighbour."‡

The Government was on this occasion represented by Lord Granville, (the administration of Lord Derby having in the previous month been displaced by that of Lord Palmerston) who, in allusion to the tone of Lord Lyndhurst's speech, said :—"If a feeling of hostility does exist, as he says it does, not on the part of the Emperor Napoleon, but on the part of the French people, I doubt that his speech will tend to allay it. When he points out in the most marked way, the defenceless character of our shores — when at the same time he boasts of our former victories, and when he makes something like insinuating and sneering allusions both to the government and people of France—I am afraid that, coming from such lips as his, such

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* Lord Palmerston, Aug. 5, 1859, *Hansard*, clv. 1079.

† *Hansard*, cliv. 645. ‡ *Hansard*, ib., 627—8.

language is not well calculated to promote the object of unbroken friendly alliance." The Duke of Somerset, who had succeeded Sir John Pakington as First Lord of the Admiralty, was still more plain-spoken on this point: "He greatly regretted the exciting language which their lordships had just heard. If such language were persevered in, it would be necessary to have not only a peace, but a war establishment. There was no peace whatever in the language of the noble and learned lord (Lord Lyndhurst). That language was calculated to excite the passions of England and France; and he thought it most unwise to talk as the noble and learned lord had done of two great nations."

It was not the speeches of individuals, however high their rank or eminent their ability, but the constant augmentation of our armaments, by successive Governments, which mainly tended to excite feelings of alarm and resentment towards France.

In this policy, the administration which had now returned to power will be found to surpass all preceding Governments.

Parliament had reassembled, after the dissolution by Lord Derby's Government, on the 31st May, 1859; and in the following month Lord Palmerston's Ministry resumed office, Just previous to the dissolution, Lord Clarence Paget had brought forward a motion on the Dockyard Expenditure, when he adduced a very elaborate series of figures and estimates to prove, that during the past eleven years there had been an unnecessary expenditure, "a deficit or a discrepancy," of £5,000,000 of money in the Government yards, or equal to twenty-two line-of-battle ships, with all complete, ready for sea; he spoke of an extravagance in the ship-building department, which "really appalled him;" said he could account for the reason why we had so little to show for such an enormous expenditure, and that, if his motion were accepted, "such statements as that of Sir John Pakington which had produced such a painful sensation out of doors, namely, that after laying out £20,000,000 on a steam navy simply for the construction of the ships, and exclusive of the costs of their engines and machinery, we were, both in numbers and quality, inferior to the French in line-of-battle ships, would be impossible." The following graphic description of the manner in which our dockyard artificers amuse themselves might help to

account for some superiority in the French navy, without implying any great merit on the part of our neighbour :—

"He did not think the House had the smallest notion of what had been going on in our dockyards in the way of tinkering vessels, amputating them, and performing all sorts of surgical operations upon them. They had their heads cut off, they had their tails cut off, they were sawn asunder, they were maltreated in every possible way. Ships built ten years ago by Sir William Symonds were not in fashion at the present day, and nobody could blame the Admiralty for lengthening and altering them, because, as originally constructed, they were not now fit to go to sea ; but he wished to speak of the reckless alteration of new ships. Their name was legion ; almost every ship was altered ; there was scarcely one that had not undergone some frightful operation some time or other."

He characterised Sir John Pakington's speech on moving the Navy Estimates, as being "the truth and nothing but the truth, but not the whole truth" ; and he proceeded to say "that it was a very able statement to make out his case, first to attack the right hon. gentleman who preceded him in office, and secondly, to induce the House to grant a large sum of money to increase our line-of-battle ships ; but he must also say that it tended to create an alarm, which he for one did not share. The First Lord, for example, did not tell the House of an admirable class of vessels, in which we possessed an immense superiority over the French — a superiority measured according to the right hon. Member for Halifax (Sir Charles Wood) by 200 excellent small ships. He was not going to enter into a discussion upon the comparative merits of line-of-battle ships and gun-boats. But if he had a large sum of money to lay out he would prefer, not gun-boats exclusively, but certainly small vessels."*

In the course of the discussion, Mr. Lindsay said : "He believed that £7,000,000, properly applied, would go as far as £10,000,000 now went in building our ships of war, and in our naval expenditure generally."† And on a previous occasion it had been stated by Mr. Bentinck that, "He had asked many of the most eminent owners of private yards in the country the question : 'Supposing you were to carry on your yards upon

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* *Hansard*, cliii. 39—48. † *Hansard* cliii. 72.

the system on which Her Majesty's dockyards are conducted, what would be the result?' and the invariable answer had been, If we were to approach that system, with the Bank of England at our back, we should be ruined in six months."*

On the 8th July, Lord Clarence Paget, having in the mean time accepted the post of Secretary of the Admiralty, introduced the Navy Estimates to the House in a long speech. The independent irresponsible critic had been suddenly metamorphosed into the Government Official. The sound precepts recently uttered by the naval reformer were brought so abruptly to the test of practice that the transformation had almost a touch of romance in it. It was as though Haroun Alraschid had seized a malcontent in his audience-chamber, thrown the pelisse of Grand Vizir over his shoulders, and said: — "Thou sayest well,—Do as thou sayest." As the Secretary had only been a few days in the department, and as the Estimates were, with some additions, those of his predecessor, which had been virtually passed, his speech may be fairly exempted from criticism. It has all the candour and hopefulness which generally characterise the first utterances of Officials before they have occasion to apply to the House for money. He put in the foreground the coast-guard fleet which had been entirely ignored by his predecessor, declaring that "he could not speak too highly of those block-ships." He expatiated also upon our resources in merchant-steamers aud private dockyards: —

"Why, Sir, we have got, I take it, from a return that was moved for a few days ago, by my hon. friend the Member for Penryn (Mr. T. G. Baring), 159 steam vessels over 1,000 tons each, and 72 between 1,000 and 700 tons each, together 231 merchant steam vessels, most of which might be quickly adapted to carry Armstrong guns, and thus prove a most valuable addition to the defences of the country. There is yet another source from which we can very largely increase our navy at any moment with regard to ships, and that is our commercial yards. Here is another return, which I think will be interesting to the Committee, according to which there are, in addition to the shipwrights employed in the royal dockyards, about 10,000 shipwrights in Great Britain. Now, it is an old

* *Hansard*, cliii. 62.

shipwright's maxim, that 1,000 shipwrights can build eight men-of-war of 1,000 tons each in twelve months; consequently, 10,000, which is the number that we have in the commercial yards of this country, could build 80 corvettes of 1,000 tons each in twelve months, or at the rate of between six and seven per month."*

He stated that the number of men then actually employed in the Government dockyards was 17,690, as against 14,128 in the beginning of March; and he added:—

"During the past year, we have built in tonnage of line-of-battle ships, 10,604 tons; in frigates, 5,851 tons; in corvettes, 1,193 tons; and in sloops and gun vessels 1,511 tons; making the total tonnage built, up to the end of the last financial year, 19,159.

* * * *

During the present year, supposing that our scheme is carried out, and that no unforeseen contingency should arise, we shall build of line-of-battle ships, 19,606 tons; of frigates, 15,897 tons; of corvettes, 5,130; and of sloops and gun-vessels, 5,651 tons; making a total of 46,284 tons which will be built this year, against, 19,159 tons last year."†

It may be concluded, from his reiterated declaration in favour of small vessels, that he administered with much repugnance to this enormous outlay on line-of-battle ships; but he must not be held responsible for the engagements of his predecessor.

Hitherto, the invasion agitation had been confined almost exclusively to the Peers. With the exception of the indefatigable Sir Charles Napier, very little had been said on the subject in the House of Commons since the startling speech on the introduction of the navy estimates. Indeed, the gallant Admiral could not help lamenting the want of that enthusiasm which had characterised the debates in the Upper House: "He had derived great satisfaction from the speeches delivered in another place by Lord Lyndhurst, Lord Hardwicke, and Lord Ellenborough, with every word of which he perfectly agreed, and he only wished they could hear such speeches in the House of Commons."‡ His wish was speedily to be gratified. But before coming to the occasion, it may be well to note a straw in

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* *Hansard*, cliv. 905. † *Hansard*, ib. 914. ‡ *Hansard*, ib. 993.

the wind. On the 15th July, Lord William Graham, addressing himself to the Foreign Minister, said, "he wished to ask the question of which he had given notice, whether the Government had received any information respecting the formation of a large channel Fleet at Brest, with gun-boats and means for embarking and disembarking troops, and, if so, whether they had demanded any explanations from the French Government on the subject."* To which Lord John Russell replied, that our Consul at Brest had informed him, that "there were no extraordinary preparations going on either at Cherbourg or Brest."

That which, without offence, may be called the great panic speech of the session—for no other epithet will so properly describe it—has now to be noticed. On the 29th July, 1859, Mr. Horsman brought forward his motion for raising money by loan "for completing the necessary works of national defence projected, or already in progress." The most desponding and terror-stricken invasion theory was put forth on this occasion. The motion assumed that all other modes of defence, whether by fleets, armies, militia, or volunteers, were insufficient, and proposed to borrow a sum of money which ultimately took the formidable proportions of from ten to twelve millions, to be expended on fortifications. The speech delivered on the occasion, unexceptionable as a rhetorical performance, was absolutely destitute of one fact or figure to prove the danger against which we were called upon to arm. There were vague assertions of "enormous preparations" and "increasing armaments," on the part of France, and she was described in her naval preparations to have "got ahead of us, and was making every effort to preserve that start," whilst, on our part, there was with the same sweeping vagueness, said to be a "want of all plan or preparation for defence on this side of the channel": but, from the first word to the last, the speech did not contain one syllable respecting the comparative strength of the English and French navies. France might at the time have had 100,000 seamen, and 100 ships of the line in the channel, judging from the tone of the speaker, and for any information which he imparted to the contrary. Let it not, however, be thought, after this

* *Hansard*, cliv. 1293.

description, that too much space is devoted to the following extracts; for although the motion did not succeed at the moment, it required only a twelvemonth, as we shall see, to make the speaker the triumphant master of the situation. The country has, in accordance with his views, been committed to a plan of expenditure more likely to reach twenty millions than ten, unless arrested by the good sense of the people, or by a recurring reverse in the revenue; and the future advocates of the scheme may be defied to show any better grounds for the outlay, than will be found in the splendid declamation before us:—

"The Emperor of the French," said he, "acted for the interests of France; it was ours to guard the safety of England, and if he were asked, 'Why do you suspect the French Emperor of designs of war?' and still more, 'Why do you insult him by suspicions of invasion?' he should be driven to answer by a reference to facts as notorious in France as in England—that he apprehended war, because he saw the Emperor of the French preparing for it; and he anticipated invasion, because an attempted invasion must be a necessary accompaniment of the war; and as they saw unmistakeable proofs of preparation for war, so also those who were not wilfully blind, must see the most unmistakeable proofs of preparation for invasion; and as to our insulting him by the suspicion, he replied, that no man could be insulted by our believing what he himself openly, publicly, and ostentatiously told us he would probably do.

* * *

"They (the Emperor's writings) afforded the key of what would otherwise be a mystery, and enable people to interpret what would otherwise be unintelligible, namely, that those vast preparations, the extension of the navy, the fortification of the coast, the enlargement and increase in the number of transports, and the conscription for the marine, all indicated preparation for a gigantic enterprise, to be undertaken some day or another against a gigantic naval Power, and that Power need not be named."*

He did not, however, confine himself to a description of these mighty preparations, but, warming as he proceeded, and giving a free rein to his imagination, he thus pictured a descent on our

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* *Hansard*, clv. 688—9.

shores: "That army would leave its own ports an exultant, and, by anticipation, a victorious army. From the moment it landed on the shores of England, it would have to fight its way with the desperation of a forlorn hope, and, within two or three weeks of the landing of the first Zouave, either it would be completely annihilated, or London would be taken."* Having passed a glowing eulogy on Lord Lyndhurst, declaring, "that he esteemed it a good fortune and a privilege to have heard the speech of that venerable peer, whose courageous exposition of a national danger had caused so much sensation,"† he called for measures of immediate protection, in language more suited to a Committee of Public Safety than, under the circumstances, to the House of Commons:—

"Not a moment must be lost in making the country safe against every accident; and until it was so, we must act as if the crisis were upon us. No human tongue could tell how soon or how suddenly it might arrive, and that it might still be distant, was our good fortune, of which we should make the most. Every public or private yard should be put into full work; every artificer and extra hand should work extra hours, as if the war were to begin next week. As gun-boats could be built more rapidly than men-of-war, gun-boats should be multiplied as fast as possible; as volunteers could be enrolled faster than the line, they should at once be raised; as rifles could not be made fast enough in England, we should renew that order in Belgium, even though they should cost sixpence a piece more than the Horse Guards' regulation; and night and day, the process of manufacturing, constructing, arming, drilling, should go on till the country was made safe, and then we might desist from preparations, and return to our peace expenditure, with the certainty that these humiliating, lowering, and degrading panic-cries of invasion would never disturb our country or our Government again."‡

The following is the only approach to a fact in the whole speech respecting the French naval armaments. "While we were only experimenting, France had already built iron-cased vessels, armed with rifled artillery—[Sir Charles Napier: hear, hear!]—and could, at short notice, bring into the Channel a fleet more

* *Hansard*, clv. 685. † *Hansard*, ib. 678. ‡ *Hansard*, ib. 686-7.

powerful than ours, and could man it more easily with practised seamen."* This was spoken on the 29th of July, 1859. On the 6th of February following, the writer of these pages visited Toulon, and found workmen employed in hanging the armour on the sides of the still unfinished *La Gloire*, the first *sea-going* iron-clad ship ever built (for England had, at the time, more iron-cased floating *batteries* than France†), and she did not make her first trial trip in the Mediterranean till August, 1860, or more than a year after these terrified utterances.

The only way of opposing reason to declamation is by exposing its want of argument and supplying its deficiency of facts. The eloquent alarmist called for the multiplication of gun-boats, forgetting that we had at that time 162, whilst France had only 28; he required that "every artificer and extra hand should work extra hours," and he had been told three weeks previously that a system of "task and job-work and over hours of working had been established in the dockyards‡ to build 46,284 tons, this year, against 19,159 tons last year;" and he totally lost sight of the enormous and almost unprecedented superiority of our navy in commission at the time as compared with that of France.

As the agitation now about to break forth out of doors respecting the National Defences, and for the promotion of Rifle Corps, was the result of the cry of alarm which was raised in the two Houses respecting the naval preparations in France, it may be well here to give the official accounts of the two countries for 1859, the last year for which, at the time of penning these pages, the French accounts are definitively audited. The following figures, taken from the tables in the first page, will show the number of men, the amount expended in dockyard labour, and the total expenditure for the navies of the two countries:—

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* *Hansard*, clv. p. 684.

† "The hon. member for Inverness-shire had stated that the building of iron-plated batteries had been neglected in this country. But the fact was, that in the year 1855, the French sent two of those floating-batteries to the Crimea, and we also sent two; while, in the following year, we had not less than eight of them, to the two possessed by the French."—Sir Charles Wood, *Hansard*, clxi. p. 1158.

‡ *Ibid*, cliv. p. 912.

1859.

	Number of Men.	Wages in Dockyards.	Total Expenditure.
England .	72,400	£1,582,112	£11,072,243
France . .	38,470	772,931	8,333,933

It must be borne in mind that this was the year of the war in Italy, when the French navy was called into requisition to aid the operations of the army, and especially to assist in the transport of troops to Genoa. Yet, it will be seen, that our total expenditure exceeded that of France by the amount of £2,738,310. The disproportion is, however, still greater, if we compare the other items: in men, our force was nearly double, whilst in dockyard expenditure, which has been called the "aggressive outlay," it was actually more than double. If we compare the two years 1858 and 1859, we shall find, that whilst France added 8,868 to the number of her men, we added 16,517, or in nearly double the proportion to ours. It will be found, also, by a comparison of the expenditure in the dockyards for the same years, that whilst our increase was £590,520, that of France was only £131,977. This shows that the increased cost of the French navy was for the current expenses, in materials, coal, provisions, pay, etc., consequent upon employing 300 vessels in 1859, as against 199 in 1858, and not for building new ships to create a permanent increase of force. And this view has been verified by an examination of all the details of the French naval expenditure for 1859. If the reader will carry his eye carefully back over the whole of the tables in the first page, he will find that at no time, for twenty-five years, had the naval preparations of England, as measured by the number of men, or the expenditure for building ships, been so disproportionately great, as compared with those of France, as in 1859. The alarm on this occasion, as in the case of the previous panic of 1851, was excited at the very time when it happened to have the least foundation, which might appear strange, did we not know that panic is not the product of reason but passion, and that it is quite as liable to occur under one state of circumstances as another.

Although little allusion will be made to the increase in our

land forces, because it has not, as in the case of the navy, been generally justified by an appeal to the corresponding preparations in France, yet it must not be forgotten that the army, militia, and ordnance, had undergone augmentations simultaneously with those of our fleets. In a subsequent debate on the National Defences (5th August), Lord Palmerston said :—

" I hold that in the event of war, we could put into the field something little short of 200,000 fighting men. We have the regular force of, I hope, not less than 60,000 men. Then we have the Militia, the establishment of which is 120,000 men ; and if that Militia be well recruited and supplied, as, in the event of emergency, I am sure would be the case, I reckon upon 100,000 there. Then we have 14,000 yeomanry ; 12,000 or 14,000 pensioners ; and then we have those men who have served their ten years, with whom my right hon. friend the Secretary for War proposes to deal to-night. We have, also, always at home a certain force of marines ; and we could, if we chose, re-organise our dockyard battalions for the defence of those establishments. Putting all these forces together, I say that an enemy contemplating an attack upon us must reckon upon not less than 200,000 men to resist him."

Such was the state of our preparations, by land and sea, when Parliament was prorogued, after having laid the train for an agitation which spread throughout the country during the recess. The Rifle Corps movement, which now arose, is of such recent origin, and the subsequent proceedings to promote its success, are so fresh in the memory of all, that it is unnecessary to dwell on the subject. Not only were special meetings called to forward the object, but at every public gathering, whatever its origin or purpose, the topic was sure to be obtruded. Espepecially was it so at the Agricultural Society's meetings, whose orators, instead of descanting on the rival breeds of cattle, or the various kinds of tillage, discussed the prospects of an invasion and the best mode of dealing with the invaders :—"How much will you charge the French for your corn when they land ?" cried one of his audience, to a sturdy Somersetshire yeoman who was on his legs addressing them ; and his reply—" They shall pay for it with their blood "—elicited rounds of applause. The assumption everywhere was—founded on the declarations made in Parliament—that France was surpassing us as a naval

power, that she was our equal in the largest ships, and was now providing herself with an iron-cased fleet, in which description of vessels we were quite unprepared, and that we must, therefore, be ready to fight for freedom on our own soil. The ambitious designs of the third Napoleon were discussed in language scarcely less denunciatory than that which had been applied to his uncle fifty years before. To doubt his hostile intentions was a proof of either want of patriotism or of sagacity :—had not venerable peers proclaimed their alarm, and would they have broken through their habitual reserve without sufficient cause? And did not successive Governments make enormous additions to our Navy Estimates: they were in a position to command exclusive information, and was it likely, unless they had positive proofs of impending danger, that they would have imposed such unnecessary expense on the country? This last appeal was quite irresistible, for the good British public defer, with a faith amounting to a superstition, to the authority of official men. All this tended to throw the odium of our increased taxation on the Emperor, who was supposed to personify our national danger; and the ominous words were sometimes heard: "We had better fight it out." Such was the state of fear, irritation, and resentment, in which the public mind was thrown towards the close of 1859; and probably at no previous time, within the experience of the present generation, had an accident afforded the occasion, would the country have been so resigned to a war with France.

It was under these circumstances, that the writer of these pages visited Paris* on an errand which detained him in France for more than a year. For several months afterwards, the reports of speeches at Rifle Corps meetings continued to reach the French capital, having for their invariable burden complaints of the hostile attitude of the ruler of France,

* The following incident will illustrate the state of public feeling. On his way to Paris, the writer passed a day or two at Brighton, where he met a friend, certainly one of the last men to be charged with a deficiency of courage, who, on learning the writer's destination, avowed that he had been deterred from taking his family, for the autumn, to the French metropolis by the fear of a rupture with France, and the risk of being detained prisoner by the Emperor, after the precedent of 1803.

whose character and designs, it must be confessed, were portrayed in not the most flattering colours. The effect produced, by the invasion panic in England, was very dissimilar upon different classes in France. Statesmen, and men of education and experience, did not give the British Government credit for sincerity, when it made the alleged naval armaments of France the plea for extraordinary warlike preparations. Their opinion could not be better expressed than in the words of M. Ducos (already quoted), who, when writing privately to one of his colleagues during the former panic, observed, that, "the English cabinet may possibly not be very much distressed by these imaginary terrors (as we have sometimes seen among ourselves), inasmuch as they enable them to swell their budget, and serve to strengthen a somewhat uncertain majority in Parliament."* And some pungent remarks in this sense were frequently heard in the circles of Parisian society.† But among the less intelligent masses of the people, the effect was different. Their ears had caught the echo of the voice of Sir Charles Napier, who had been for years incessantly proclaiming our naval inferiority, until there was at last a wide-spread popular belief that France had become the mistress of the Channel. With the exception of an occasional article in a semi-official journal, giving a comparison of the naval expenditures of the two Governments, with perhaps a self-complacent commentary on the superior economy of the French administration, nothing was done to disabuse the public mind on the subject. And this popular delusion might have been an element of danger to the peace of the two countries, had it not been for the character of the Emperor, who, throughout these provocations, displayed a perfect equanimity and self-control,—the rarest quality to be found in those who have climbed the dizzy heights of power.

During his residence in France, the writer profited by the best possible opportunity for making himself acquainted with the naval preparations of that country. The arsenals were open to him or his friends, and there was no official information

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* *Ante*, p. 33.

† "Ah, pauvre John Bull!" exclaimed a lady in the presence of the writer, "quand en veut lui enlever son argent on lui fait peur de nous."

which he sought and failed to obtain. The result of this investigation was merely to confirm the conviction which had been previously derived from our own official documents. Had it been otherwise, these pages would not have been penned; and yet the writer asks no credit for any statement they contain, on the ground of his private or exclusive sources of information. The facts contained in the following, as in the preceding pages, must owe all their value to the public and official sources, equally accessible to everybody, from whence they are derived. In the citations from *Hansard*, it has been thought fair to allow the statesmen who officiate in that great laboratory of our history, the British parliament, to be heard as much as possible in their own language.

On the 13th February, 1860, the Navy Estimates were proposed to the House; but before the Secretary of the Admiralty was permitted to commence his task, the ever-watchful and indefatigable Mr. Williams entered his protest against "the enormous increase in the Estimates for the present year," asserting that, "the grand total, which exceeded £12,800,000, was larger in amount by more than £1,000,000 than any that had ever been presented to that House in a time of peace"; and he proceeded to remark that "the number of men required for the navy this year of peace was 85,500, being 6,000 more than they required when they were actually at war with Russia." Mr. Lindsay, and Mr. Bentinck rose successively to acquit the Secretary of the Admiralty of all responsibility for not being able "to carry out in office the economical views he had expressed in opposition." It will be necessary not only to accept this generous theory, but still farther to enlarge the bill of indemnity, and assume that the statement now made was not the speech of Lord Clarence Paget, but that it was prepared for him by those who were responsible for the Estimates.

To reconcile the country to this enormous expenditure, it was necessary that the French navy should be made to assume very alarming proportions. But how was this to be accomplished by any ordinary mode of comparison? If the expenditure in the dockyards had been compared, ours would have been shown to be double that of France; if it had been a comparison of seamen, the number voted, together with the reserve, would have been found nearly three times as great in England as in France;

had the ships in commission, or the ships afloat in the two navies, been compared, the effect would have been the reverse of what was desired. A very ingenious and perfectly original mode of comparison was adopted. The number of ships in *commission* in England was compared with the number *afloat* in France; they chanced to be 244 in each case,* and this equality was, perhaps, the temptation to adopt the new method. Had the numbers afloat in both cases been given, they would have been, as afterwards incidentally appears in the statement, 244 French and 456 English.† In justification of this mode of comparison, by which all the British vessels not having crews were left out of the account, it was alleged that, "while all the French ships that were afloat could be manned at a very short notice, it was only those which we had in commission which were in a similar position."‡ It is to be regretted that there was no Lord Clarence Paget in opposition to ask—"of what use could it be to build ships and launch them, if they were afterwards to count for nothing?" But it is curious to observe, in another part of the same statement, how this difficulty is surmounted, for, in speaking of the facility with which seamen had been obtained, it is said—

"And perhaps I had better add a more practical assurance, that, if we wished, we could not enter them (seamen) in the navy, because the number is complete, and, except for casualties, we have no means of entering any considerable number of men over and above what we have at present. I think that is a very satisfactory state of things, and that the house will be glad to hear that there is no difficulty in getting men. This vast force of ships, only the creation of the last few months, is wholly manned."§

Now, it is high time that we shook off this bugbear of the difficulty of manning the navy, and learnt to rely on the infallible law of demand and supply. Formerly, we trusted to the press-gang to steal the men; in future we shall find it a cheaper and safer method to pay the market price for them.¶

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* *Hansard*, clvi. 966-9.

† *Hansard*, ib., 966-9.

‡ *Hansard*, ib., 967.

§ *Hansard*, ib., 974.

¶ "If they wanted men in the navy they must resort to the same means as a mercantile man or a millowner—namely, offer a good market price

This is illustrated by the case before us. At the moment when this statement was made, there was a bounty payable of £4 for able and £2 for ordinary seamen. It had been fixed at £10 the year before by Sir John Pakington, but it was soon found not to be necessary to pay so high a bounty to bring our navy up to 80,000 men. Now, we will suppose that a war was impending, and that the country required the services of 150,000 instead of 80,000 seamen,—is there any doubt that England could afford to pay the necessary price for them? There is no kind of skilled labour so available, because there is none so migratory and so free from local ties as that of the sailor. Let us assume a sudden and urgent necessity to arise, and that our Government offered to pay £40 a-year, to able-bodied seamen, which would be £10 or £15 more than the present pay, taking care that, the wages be paid monthly, in order to avoid the temptation to desert, which would be offered by paying a bounty in advance,—unquestionably such an offer would give the Admiralty the pick not only of our own merchant service, but of the seamen sailing out of American, German, and Scandinavian ports. Now, £40 each for 150,000 seamen amounts to just £6,000,000 a-year. It is about sixpence in the pound of the income-tax, or half the amount paid in excise and customs duties by the consumers of ardent spirits. A nation so rich as this would cheerfully pay such an amount for its defence in case of danger. It would be but the most fractional percentage of insurance on the thousands of millions worth of property in these islands, and would be only about five per cent. on the estimated average value of the ships and cargoes afloat belonging to British owners. But if it be admitted that at least on these, if not on cheaper terms, the seamen will be forthcoming in case of an impending war, what becomes of the argument that we can only calculate on manning those ships which are already in commission?

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for labour. If they wanted sailors they must offer to pay sufficiently high to induce them to come forward and enter the service. To expect men to enter for low wages would only lead to disappointment; it would be found to be impossible to get them without high wages. That was the only fair and just way of obtaining them,—but hitherto the House of Commons had refused to adopt it."—Sir Charles Napier. *Hansard*, clvii. 1810.

If we pursue the statement of the Secretary of the Admiralty a little more into details, we find, on comparing the whole of the screw line-of-battle ships, built and building, in the two navies, that whilst France is stated to possess thirty-seven, England is put down at fifty-nine, with the nine blockships making sixty-eight. The English frigates are set down at forty-five, and the French at forty-seven, including the fifteen old transatlantic paddle steamers. In the smaller descriptions of vessels, our number was double that of the French.

The striking fact is given in this statement that we had still twelve sailing line-of-battle ships fit for conversion into screw steamers. Now, considering that the Admiralty had, ever since 1850, professed to lay down no vessels of this class which were not expressly designed for steam machinery, thus recognising that sailing vessels were for the future obsolete, what shall be said of the policy of continuing to build new ships, and leaving twelve sailing vessels still fit to be converted in 1860, to say nothing of those which had in the interval been decaying in ordinary, and rendered unfit for conversion. And what must be thought of those who, when this mismanagement became apparent, directed the cry of alarm and resentment against France, because, by pursuing a more provident course, she had, in a shorter time, and at less expense, attained more satisfactory results than ourselves? The following is the account of the tonnage built in the past year, and estimate for the year following :—

"It may possibly be remembered that, in proposing the estimates last year, we announced our intention, of course subject to contingencies, of building 46,000 tons of shipping in the dockyards. [Sir J. Pakington: 'Exclusive of conversions?'] We said we would convert four line-of-battle ships and five frigates in addition. What we have actually built amounts to 19,730 tons in ships of the line, 13,654 in frigates, 5,436 in corvettes, and 5,224 in sloops and gun-vessels. We have not fulfilled our promise as to frigates, in which class I stated that we would build 16,000 tons, the reason being that there was an insufficiency of timber for the purpose; but we have made up for the deficiency in another way, for we have gone beyond our undertaking in the conversion of sailing into steam frigates and screw ships. What we propose doing in the present, or, as my right hon. friend

reminds me, the ensuing financial year, is to build 13,216 tons of ships of the line, 13,500 tons of frigates, 4,871 tons of corvettes, 8,045 tons of sloops and gun-vessels, and 302 tons of gunboats, making a total of 39,934 tons. In addition, we propose to convert four more line-of-battle ships and four frigates."*

The estimated constructions for the ensuing year are thus explained in ships instead of tonnage :—

"Supposing the Committee is pleased to consent to these estimates, we hope to add to the navy, before the end of the next financial year, eight line-of-battle ships, twelve frigates, four iron-cased ships, four corvettes, fifteen sloops, and twenty-three gun-vessels and gunboats. That includes the conversion of four line-of-battle ships and four frigates."†

It is impossible to deal with this proposal of the Secretary of the Admiralty to add eight line-of-battle ships and twelve frigates to our steam navy, without referring to the part he had previously taken in opposition to the further construction of large ships, for he was the first and ablest opponent of the policy which he now followed when in office. So long ago as May, 1857, he expressed his opinion that line-of-battle ships were "not the instruments by which in future the fate of empires would be decided."‡ He then advised the First Lord to "rest on his oars,"§ and stated that "an *Enquête* or Commission was sitting in France to inquire whether line-of-battle ships were or were not the most efficient class of ships which could now be employed."‖ Every circumstance which had since occurred tended to confirm the views then expressed by Lord Clarence Paget. As each new experiment with artillery displayed the destructive effects of detonating shells, or of molten iron, even the oldest admirals raised their hands and exclaimed, "There is an end of wooden ships of the line!" The *Enquête* or Commission appointed in France was known to have decided against line-of-battle ships, for in the report upon the comparative state of the English and French navies presented to the House in 1859, it is stated that naval men in France "were of opinion that no more ships of the line will be laid down, and

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* *Hansard*, clvi. 978. † *Hansard*, clvi. 969.
‡ *Ante*, p. 46. § Ibid. ‖ Ibid.

that in ten years that class of vessels will have become obsolete."* This had reference to the successful experiments in iron-cased ships.

But, independent of this innovation, the opinion of the highest nautical authorities had been pronounced against the policy of exposing such a huge target as a line-of-battle ship, with perhaps a thousand men and thirty or forty tons of gunpowder on board, to the fire of modern shell guns. The Americans had abandoned these large ships before the iron-clad vessels were thought of, and it is stated that when their greatest authority, Captain Dahlgren, visited our ports more than three years ago, although he was much struck with the gun-boats, to which he devoted particular attention, he looked upon line-of-battle ships as all but obsolete, and considered that, so far as America was concerned, her naval policy "would render the construction of such vessels almost useless."† The condemnation of wooden ships of the line by intelligent naval men had found utterance in very emphatic phrases:—"They will be blown to lucifer matches," said one; "they will be mere human slaughter-houses," said another; whilst a third declared that, in case of two such vessels coming into collision, at close quarters, the only word of command for which there would be time would be, "Fire, and lower your boats."

The comparative numbers of these vessels possessed by England and France deprived the Admiralty of every pretext for this increase. The Secretary, in his statement, informs us that we had at the time sixty-eight ships of the line, including blockships, whilst France had only thirty-seven; and as Sir Charles Wood had stated the French force in 1847 at forty,‡ and as they were put down also at forty in the report of 1859,§ it was clear in 1860, that our neighbour had abandoned the further building of these vessels. All these facts were well known to our Government, when they were pushing forward the construction of large wooden vessels at a rate of expenditure unparalleled even at the height of the great French war. It will presently be seen, that so manifest did the impolicy of this

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* *Parliamentary Paper*, 182 of 1859, p. 15.

† *The Navies of the World*, by Hans Busk, p. 116.

‡ *Anté*, 44. § *Anté*, 57.

course at length become to everybody except the Admiralty, that the common sense of the House of Commons rose in revolt the following session, and extorted from the minister a pledge to discontinue the further building of ships-of-the-line, and to abandon, unfinished, those on the stocks. The gigantic sacrifice involved in this outlay of public money will, in a very few years, be brought home to the appreciation of the British public, in the possession of hundreds of wooden vessels of different sizes which will be acknowledged to be valueless and even dangerous to their possessors, and then only will be fully estimated the system of management which could have created such a costly monument to its own recklessness and want of forethought.

It is impossible to doubt that the Secretary of the Admiralty remained unchanged in the views he had expressed when in opposition, indeed, any intelligent and unprejudiced mind must have become confirmed by experience in those sound opinions. Whilst extending to him the full benefit of that dispensation from individual responsibility which is claimed for those who become members of a government, it is to be desired, in the interest of the country, which has also its claim on the talents and judgment of public men, that some casuist, skilled in political ethics, would define the limit of inconsistency beyond which politicians shall not be allowed to wander.

The navy estimates, the unparalleled amount of which was accurately described in the brief protest of Mr. Williams, were agreed to without further opposition; and it is in connection with this fact that the reader is asked to regard the demonstration which now calls for notice.

On the 1st May, 1860, Lord Lyndhurst rose in the House of Peers, pursuant to previous notice, to call for explanations from the Government respecting the progress of the naval reserve, when he delivered a speech identical in spirit and object with that of the previous year.

Of the many voices that have been raised to agitate the public mind on the subject of our armaments, none has found a louder echo on the Continent than that of this learned peer. It is only the natural result of his high position and great ability. To him in the Lords, and Mr. Horsman and Sir

Charles Napier in the Commons, and to the connivance of successive Governments, are mainly attributed, in France, the success of the invasion panic. "The motions of Lord Lyndhurst and of Mr. Horsman," says M. Cucheval Clarigny, "the speeches and letters of Sir Charles Napier; the exaggerations, sincere or pretended, of the orators of the Government and of the opposition, about the forces of France—all had contributed to create a kind of panic in England."*

Lord Lyndhurst had, on a previous occasion, resented the remarks of an adverse critic in the House of Commons, who had alluded to his great age. It must be allowed that his speeches invite no such allusion, unless to elicit even from an opponent the tribute of admiration for their great intellectual merits. The close and logical reasoning of his latest speeches, so free from the garrulity, or the tendency to narrative, which generally take the place of argument in the discourses of the aged, presents an instance of the late preservation of the mental powers for which it would be difficult to find a parallel. In conceding to him, however, all the authority which attaches to the possession of unimpaired faculties, he becomes divested of that privilege by which the venerable in years are shielded from an unequal conflict with other men, and he must consent to be held amenable to criticism for his public utterances, and for the proper exercise of the influence which his learning and rank confer on him.

England and France had been at peace for forty-five years, and just previously a treaty of commerce had been entered into which was designed to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two countries. Passing over this event, with a sneer at "the further exchange of pottery and cotton for silks and wine," he seized this inopportune moment for going back half a century to disinter the buried strife of our fathers, and again to taunt our brave neighbours with their naval reverses:—"The French navy," he said, "was, by the great victory of the Nile, the victory of Lord Duncan, that of Lord St. Vincent, and the great and splendid victory of Trafalgar, reduced at the termination of the war to such a state that for twenty years after that period we remained, as far as our navy was

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* "*The Navy Budgets of England and France*," p. 69.

concerned, in a state of perfect tranquillity." The aim of the speaker was to show that the restoration of the French navy was the work of Louis Napoleon. He must be allowed to be heard in his own language:—

"Such, my Lords, was the result of the efforts made during the great French war. Very little change took place until after the memorable event which I now beg to call to your attention, I mean the accession to supreme power of the present Emperor of the French. In the year 1848 he was elected President of the Republic; and in the following year that celebrated Commission was appointed for the purpose of considering the re-organisation of the navy of France. That Commission was composed of fifteen or more of the most able men selected from the navy and from the civil service of France, and they have framed a code of regulations of the most complete kind, for the purpose of stimulating and directing the efforts of the French navy. I have stated one remarkable date with respect to the issuing of that Commission. There is another date equally remarkable. No report was called for from that Commission until after the celebrated event of the 2nd of December. About twelve or fourteen days after that *coup d'état*, namely on the 15th of December, a report was called for by Louis Napoleon, and from that time the most strenuous exertions have been made to carry all the recommendations of that Committee into effect."*

Now, here are specific and tangible facts, which are not often found in speeches on this topic. In the first place, it is alleged that there was very little change in the relations of the English and French navies until after the election of Louis Napoleon as President of the Republic. It has been shown in the preceding pages, that the French navy bore a much larger proportion to that of England during the latter part of Louis Philippe's reign, than it has done since Louis Napoleon has been at the head of affairs. If the reader will give himself the trouble to turn to the tables in the first page, and compare the period between 1840 and 1848, with that between 1849 and 1859, he will see how much more largely the disproportion has

* *Hansard*, clviii. 425.

been to the disadvantage of France during the latter than the former period.

Next, there is an allusion to a Commission appointed in 1849, the year after the election of Louis Napoleon as President, to consider the reorganisation of the French navy, and it might be inferred that this Commission was named by the President. It was, however, an *Enquête Parlémentaire*, emanating from the National Assembly, by a law of the 31st October, 1849, at a time when Louis Napoleon had acquired no ascendancy over that body.

Then, we have the portentous revelation, that this Commission had framed "a code of regulations of the most complete kind," that no Report was called for until after the 2nd December, 1851 (the date of the *Coup d'Etat*) that about twelve or fourteen days after, "namely on the 15th December, a report was called for by Louis Napoleon, and from that time the most strenuous exertions have been made to carry all the recommendations of that Committee into effect." Now, this is not only an ingenious argument, but an effective appeal to our imaginations. Here was an ambitious man who had just thrown down the gauntlet to the National Assembly, which he had dissolved, and had appealed to the country to arbitrate between him and that body: and yet, while his fate was trembling in the balance, and it was still to be decided whether he should take a step towards the throne, or be again driven into exile, the one great dominant purpose of his life was never for a moment forgotten, the only absorbing thought of his mind was vengeance to England! How deep and enduring must have been his hate, that, even whilst the vote by universal suffrage was going on, instead of thinking of the state of the poll, he should call for the Report on the state of the navy! The argument was worthy of the speaker in his best days, in Westminster Hall; but, unluckily for the noble and learned lord, he departed from the usual vague declamation on this topic, and appealed to facts and dates. It is really almost incredible that a judicial peer, speaking in the highest assembly in the kingdom, conscious of the weight that would attach to his words, and accustomed to weigh and examine evidence, should have permitted himself to be the medium for making this extraordinary statement. These are the simple facts:—

The Commission, or *Enquête Parlémentaire*, was, as has been stated, appointed by the *Assemblée Nationale*, on the 31st October, 1849. It pursued its labours for upwards of two years, examining witnesses, visiting the dockyards, and calling for accounts and papers. The result of these investigations was printed in two thick quarto volumes, which we should call "blue books," comprising the minutes of evidence, and an appendix of official documents. The preface to these volumes, dated 30th January, 1852, gives a brief and simple narrative of the singular fate of the commission, which was cut off, at the most critical moment of its existence, by the *coup d'état* of the 2nd December, 1851, when the National Assembly itself was dissolved.

It appears that M. Dufaure, the Reporter—or, as we should say in England, the Chairman—of the Commission had read to his colleagues a part only of his Report, which was ordered to be printed, and to be distributed among the members previous to their deliberations, but the preface proceeds to say, "This was rendered impossible after the 2nd December. Neither the Commission nor the Assembly from which it emanated could meet again. Its task, therefore, remained unaccomplished." It further states that, "the whole of the resolutions of the Commission were only provisional, and on some important points they had not even deliberated": and it adds, in conclusion, that, "If the Report should be published, with the documents which ought to accompany it, it will not have been submitted to the Commission; it will only be the production of the individual Reporter, who alone will be responsible for the opinions expressed in it."

Upwards of 200 "provisional" votes of the Commission are recorded in the minutes of proceedings. The first on the list, after the routine votes, and the most important as affecting ourselves, is a recommendation that the maximum of the number of line-of-battle ships should thenceforth be forty-five; namely, thirty afloat and fifteen on the stocks, and that they should all be furnished with screws. It was a moderate limit compared with the old naval establishment of France. "From that time," says Lord Lyndhurst, "the most strenuous exertions have been made to carry all the recommendations of the Commission into effect." There were no recommendations of the

Commission, for it never made a Report. But, so far was the Government from taking prompt measures to carry out the "provisional" resolution respecting screw line-of-battle ships, that in 1854, in the height of the Crimean war, the French had only ten screw liners;* and Sir Charles Napier stated that they had but one in the Baltic in that year.† Indeed, it is now universally agreed, that it was subsequently to that period that serious efforts were made to convert the French sailing ships into a steam navy: "the great increase in the naval force of France," says a writer already quoted, "may, therefore, be considered to date from the Crimean war."‡

But the gravest inaccuracy in Lord Lyndhurst's statement remains to be noticed, where he links the present state of the French navy with the labours of the Commission of 1849. "The result of that Commission," he said, "and of the admirable system which was formed under it, has turned out to be a formidable navy—a formidable navy of steam-vessels, to which alone I confine my observations."§ He was clearly not aware of what had taken place subsequently to the untimely dissolution of that body. In 1855, a Commission was appointed by the Emperor's Government, to consider the organisation of the navy; and the result was a Report from the Minister of Marine, which was approved by a decree of the Emperor, in 1857, fixing the number of ships to be built, from year to year, until 1870; and this decree was published to the whole world. The line-of-battle ships were to reach a maximum of forty, instead of forty-five, as recommended by the resolution of the Commission of 1849. The Report contains the exact nomenclature of French shipping, with the strength of each ship in guns and horse-power. In fact, if it were not for the innovations which science is incessantly making, involving the reconstruction of her navy, all Europe might know, from this decree, for nearly ten years to come, what ships of all kinds France would possess.

If we turn to that part of Lord Lyndhurst's speech, which referred to the state of our own navy, we shall find that, instead of dealing with the Estimates of the year in which he spoke,

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* *Navies of the World*, p. 88.
† *Hansard*, clv. 702.
‡ *Navies of the World*, p. 89.
§ *Hansard*, clviii. 426.

he preferred to revive those figures of Sir John Pakington, which had done such good service the previous year. Leaving totally out of view upwards of 300 of our steam ships of war afloat, ranging from corvettes to gun-boats, all capable of carrying the heaviest guns, and the hundreds of large merchant-steamers which would be available in case of war, and omitting all allusion to the great increase in our ships of the line and frigates during the preceding year, he thus proceeded to lay before his audience the state of our navy :—

"At the beginning of last year, our fleet consisted of twenty-nine sail of the line, and the French fleet of precisely the same number; while we had twenty-six frigates, they had thirty-four." And he added, with singular candour, that "what addition has been made to our fleet, since the commencement of last year, I am not informed." It would have been only an act of ordinary prudence to have perused the speech of Lord Clarence Paget, delivered more than two months before; or, at least, to have possessed himself of a copy of the Navy Estimates for 1860. He would have then learnt that England had 456 steamers of all kinds afloat, against 244 in France; and it would have saved him from falling into the erroneous opinion which he expressed, in proceeding to say: "I do not imagine that at this moment our fleet exceeds, or if it does, only in a small degree, the steam naval force of France."

The object of the speech, however, was to show the danger we were in from want of seamen,—a point on which the noble speaker would also have been better informed, if he had perused the speech of the Secretary of the Admiralty, who had taken a vote for 85,500 men and boys, and had declared that more seamen were offering than the Admiralty required. "In point of material," said Lord Lyndhurst, "that is to say in ships, you are far below the requirements of the country; while, so far as the manning of the ships is concerned, you are in a situation the most deplorable. I do not mince the matter. Our position, in this respect, ought to be known throughout the country. No man ought to be ignorant of the real facts of the case."* Now, considering that he was, by his own con-

* *Hansard*, clviii. 435.

fession at the moment, in ignorance of all that had occurred in the navy since the previous year, this confident tone of the speaker implied, at least, a strong belief in the favourable temper of his audience.

And it was undoubtedly to this favourable state of feeling in the Peers that the success of these speeches, both indoors and without, was mainly due; for they did not contain one fact that would bear the test of fair examination. The Upper House had, indeed, been the platform whence this invasion agitation spread throughout a large portion of the middle ranks of society. The Peers had made it fashionable to believe in the hostile designs of Louis Napoleon, and it became, to a certain extent, a test of respectability to be zealous in the promotion of rifle-corps, and other means of defending the country. To contend against the probability of invasion was to take the side of the enemy, to be called anti-English, or accused of being for peace at any price; nay, to require even proofs or arguments to show the reality of the danger, was to invite suspicion of want of patriotism. There was a kind of genteel terrorism exerted over everybody in "society," which, for a time, put down all opposition to the invasion party,—which was tacitly understood to be the aristocratic, anti-radical party. This *animus* (reminding one of 1791) reveals itself in the speech before us in a manner which would have been to the last degree impolitic, if there had really been any danger from a foreign enemy, requiring "every class to unite in support of the honour and independence of the nation." In his concluding sentences, the noble speaker, who is too logical to have introduced such irrelevant matter had it not been to conciliate those he was addressing, protests against a reform of Parliament, and animadverts severely on those whom he characterises as being in favour of direct taxation or desirous of introducing among us the social "equality, without liberty, that exists in France," or who are seeking to "pull down the wealthier and aristocratic classes."

The Duke of Somerset, the First Lord of the Admiralty, in his reply to Lord Lyndhurst, gave the following account of the labour which the Government was employing in the construction of those large wooden vessels which had been

condemned as worse than useless by some of the highest naval authorities in Europe and America* :—

"And I can say that during the last eight months more men have been employed in our dockyards than at any previous period of the history of the country. I do not exclude the time of the great war, down to 1815; and in this statement, I exclude the factories altogether, which form another great division of our naval establishments. I speak of the ship-building department only."

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"The noble and learned lord referred to the ships which we have now afloat. I find that we have built, and that there are now afloat, fifty ships of the line.

"*Lord Lyndhurst.*—Do you include block-ships?

"*The Duke of Somerset.*—I am not taking the block-ships into account." †

The little question and answer, at the close of the above extract, illustrates the manner in which the Coast-Guard block-ships are, by all Governments, left out of the numerical list of our ships of the line. It is true, they are sometimes alluded to, incidentally, as being fit for guarding harbours or mouths of rivers. But the question always recurs: seeing that these ships have the full complement of officers, the most complete armament, and picked seamen provided for them, seeing that they have a fleet of fifteen to twenty steam gun-boats attached to them, besides sailing vessels, and that they are all placed under a flag-officer,—why, during the time when scores of good sailing line-of-battle ships were decaying in ordinary, were not some of them fitted with screws and substituted for such of the block-ships, as are alleged to be not fit for Channel service? Some people will be uncharitable enough to suspect that the object is to have an excuse for another Channel fleet.

The following is the manner in which the "First Lord"

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* Lord Clarence Paget had, a fortnight previously stated, in the House of Commons, that "the total number of persons employed in the dock-yards, on the 1st March, was 20,032"; and he stated subsequently (8th June), that the greatest number employed during the great war with France, was only 14,754."—*Hansard*, clvii. 2014.

† *Hansard*, clviii. 438-9.

replied to Lord Lyndhurst upon the progress which had been made since the previous year in manning the navy:—

"The noble and learned lord says we have the ships, but the ships are not half manned; but it so happens, that it is just the contrary difficulty under which we have laboured. On coming into office, I found certain estimates prepared, and a £10 bounty in existence. I adopted these, and before the month of August I found that the number of men voted by Parliament was exceeded by 1000. The news of the Chinese disaster arrived in September, and I did not think it was prudent, under these circumstances, to put a stop to the enrolment of seamen; the result is that, for the last six months, we have been 5000 in excess of the vote. This year we determined to cover that larger number by a larger vote, but they were still coming in so rapidly that I was obliged to come to the determination only to take able seamen, or ordinary seamen who had already served on board the fleet and been drilled to the guns. When the noble and learned lord says, that, if we look to the last month or so, it will be found that we were not getting men; of course that was so. The men we have are included in the estimates, and it was not likely I should be taking additional men when I had already 5,000 men more than had been provided for."*

This statement completely cut the ground from under the feet of Lord Lyndhurst;—but it did more,—it showed that the Government had no excuse for entertaining the question of a reserve at that moment at all. The formation of a reserve would be a legitimate measure in connection with a peace establishment; but our navy was not on a peace footing. Let the reader be good enough to turn to the accounts in the first page, and placing his finger on the number of men in the English navy in 1852, the year before the Russian war, let him run his eye back over the table to the commencement in 1835, and he will find only four years in the eighteen in which the Seamen were *one half* the number (85,500) voted for 1860; and the highest number on record in a year of peace previous to the Russian war was 44,960.

The French state their complement of men for 1860 at 30,588, namely 26,329 afloat, and 4,259 in reserve. But as the

* *Hansard*, clviii. 440.

accounts for 1860 are not yet definitively audited, this *estimate* as it may be called, is open to the objection which has been recognised from the first. It will be better to take an authority which will not be disputed on this side of the water. In the month of March following, Lord Carence Paget* states the number of French seamen at 34,000, of which 10,000 were from the military conscription or landsmen. This statement was repeated by Lord Palmerston.† The reader is now asked to refer to the accounts in the first page, and casting his eye over the table of men in the French navy from 1852 back to the commencement, to compare the 34,000 maintained in 1860 with the numbers in each of those eighteen years. He will not find an increase comparable with that in the English table. In more than one of those years, the number exceeded that of 1860, and in many years of Louis Philippe's reign the numbers approached very nearly to that of the above year.

The more important test, however, is the *proportion* of force maintained by each of the two countries in 1860 and at former periods. The reader's attention is especially asked to this point, for it involves the whole question at issue as to the alleged responsibility of France for the great increase in our naval armaments. Turning to the accounts, we find, on looking down the two columns of seamen, that England generally had about twenty-five or thirty per cent more men than France. In portions of Louis Philippe's reign the superiority was much less on the side of England. In 1840-41, for instance, France approached very nearly to an equality with us. Taking the average number maintained by France for the whole period of eighteen years down to 1852, the year before the Russian war, and comparing it with the average number maintained by England, they were 27,962 French and 38,085 English. In 1860, as we have seen, they were 34,000 French and 85,500 English. In other words, in the former period our navy had 10,123 more seamen than France, and at the latter date the excess was 51,500.

But we are told, that the Maritime Inscription gives to the French Government the right of calling upon the whole of the merchant seamen to serve in the imperial navy. This power was, however, equally possessed by the Government of Louis

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* *Hansard*, clxi. 1774. † *Hansard*, ib., 1789.

Philippe. The Maritime Inscription is an institution nearly two centuries old. It is a register which comprises every youth and man following a sea life, or employed on rivers running to the sea, or working in dockyards, etc., who are all liable to serve in the Government navy. The number of available seamen is apt to be much exaggerated, owing to the large proportion of landsmen included in the Inscription. The best way of comparing the naval resources of the two countries is by a reference to the amount of their merchant shipping. England possesses at least four times the tonnage of France, exclusive of colonial shipping; and although the ships of the latter country carry larger crews than those of the former, on the other hand the English people take more freely to the sea for boating, yachting, and fishing, than their neighbours. It is quite certain, then, that England has four times as many sailors to draw on as France, and against the power of impressment possessed by her, we must put the ability to pay for the services of our seamen which is possessed by England. If France has 60,000 merchant seamen from whence to draw by impressment the crews of her imperial marine, we have 240,000 to supply the men for the royal navy, in case of real emergency, by the equally sure process of voluntary enlistment for high pay.*

Lord Hardwicke, who ought to be well informed on the subject, remarked, in the course of this debate, that "it was stated that the French had a reserve of 60,000; but he believed it was known to officers of their own fleet, that not more than half that number was at any time available to man the navy. 30,000 trained seamen was, however, a most formidable force, etc."† But let us suppose the whole of these 30,000 men added

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* The following statement of the loss and gain by impressment, made by Lord Clarence Paget, shows, that it is a very unreliable mode of manning the navy:—"During the years 1811, 1812, and 1813, the closing period of the great war with France, there were pressed into the service 29,405 men, while the number of those who deserted was 27,300—so that the total gain to the country, during those three years, by impressment was 2,105 men. But, in order to bring those men thus compulsorily into the service, 3,000 good sailors had been employed on shore as press-gangs. Therefore the country actually lost about 1,000 men during those three years under the system."—*Hansard*, cliv. 909.

† *Hansard*, clviii. 449.

to the French imperial marine, nay, let us even empty every merchant ship of their able-bodied crews, and suppose that 50,000 in addition to the present 34,000 were placed at the service of the French Government, and it would still leave the number less by 1,500 than the 85,500 men that had been already voted by our Parliament for 1860; and we were told the men were pressing to enter the service faster than the Admiralty required them.

That, under such circumstances, a Government should lend its sanction to the cry of the alarmists, and pretend to be occupied in securing a reserve to protect us against France, was something like an abuse of public confidence. All this costly and complete preparation to meet some hypothetical danger implies a total want of faith in those latent resources of the nation which patriotism would evoke in the event of a real emergency. It has been frequently said by those most competent to judge, that, in case of actual danger to our shores, the merchant seamen, of whom about one-third are estimated to be always in port, would come forward to a man for the defence of the country.

The opinion of the seamen themselves on this subject was no doubt correctly expressed in a few words of manly common sense quoted by the Duke of Somerset, as the declaration of the sailors of Hartlepool:—They say, "We are doing well in the merchant service, and we do not want to be sent out to any of your little wars, to China or the River Plate, or any of those places where you are always carrying on some small hostilities; but when it comes to a regular European war, we will take our share in it with any men."*

Such were the naval armaments of the two counrries in 1860. England had added to her navy since 1857 nearly as many men as were contained in the whole marine of France. Yet, during the spring and summer of this year, the cry of alarm was still heard, and, with a view to the greater security of our shores, the Rifle Corps movement was actively promoted under the most influential patronage. Already it was announced, that the numbers enrolled in the Corps amounted to 130,000, and it was said that the foreigner had been impressed in a salutary manner

* *Hansard*, clviii. 444.

by this martial demonstration. All this was, however, insufficient; and we now approach the climax of the third panic in the gigantic project for fortifications shortly to be initiated in the House of Commons.

A passing notice must, however, be taken of one or two of the little episodes in Parliament, which reflected the nervous excitement of certain classes out of doors. Mr. Kinglake "had been informed that great preparations were being urged forward for the supply of horse transports on the north coast of France."* Sir Charles Napier had heard from an American traveller that there were 14,000 men at work in Toulon dockyards, besides 3,000 convicts.† Both Houses of Parliament were simultaneously agitated upon the subject of a report which had appeared in the newspapers, announcing that English shipwrights were finding employment in Cherbourg and other French dockyards. Numbers of artificers were crowding to the police magistrates to obtain passports. The subject was brought under the notice of the Lords by Viscount Dungannon, and of the Commons by Mr. Johnstone, the latter said, "from information he had received, there were at this moment between 1,200 and 1,300 of our skilled artisans employed in the French dockyards," and he added, that "it was a very grave matter that some of our best shipwrights should be employed in building French ships."‡ Lord Clarence Paget replied that the regulations did not allow foreigners to work in French dockyards.

The Duke of Somerset stated, in answer to the question in the Lords, that the only vessel now being built in Cherbourg was a transport; that so far from the French taking on fresh hands, several hundreds of their own workpeople had been lately discharged; and that the British shipwrights who had gone there in consequence of the statements which had appeared in the English newspapers, not being able to find work, had "fallen into a pitiable condition, and bitterly repented their credulity."§

On the 23rd July, 1860, Lord Palmerston brought forward the Government measure, for "the construction of works for the defence of the royal dockyards and arsenals, and of the ports

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* *Hansard*, clvi. 519.

† *Hansard*, clviii. 1309.

‡ *Hansard*, clix. 209.

§ *Hansard*, clix. 844.

of Dover and Portland, and for the creation of a central arsenal," when he delivered what was pronounced by Mr. Horsman to be one of the most serious and alarming speeches he ever heard delivered by a minister of the Crown in the time of peace," and which he declared he had heard with "satisfaction."* This must be admitted to have been only natural, for Mr. Horsman found himself and his views in the ascendant. A Commission had been appointed (at the pressing instance, as he informed us, of Sir De Lacy Evans) to devise a scheme of fortifications, whose report, now laid before the House and adopted by the Government, recommended an expenditure, spread over a series of years, of £11,000,000, but which the opponents of the scheme predicted would, according to all analogous precedent, result in an outlay of double the amount.

The most striking feature of this speech is, that it does not contain one syllable of allusion to the navy—for which nearly £13,000,000 had been voted this year—as a means of defending our shores.† The only supposition of a naval battle is, that it occurs after the successful landing of a considerable force for the purpose of destroying our dockyards, and "cutting up our navy by the roots;" and then we are told that, if any naval action were to take place, whatever the success might be, "our enemy would have his dockyards, arsenals, and stores to refit and replenish, and reconstruct his navy; whilst, with our dockyards burnt, and our stores destroyed, we should have no means of refitting our navy and sending it out again to battle."‡

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* *Hansard*, clx. 565.

† If the Secretary of the Admiralty keep a private diary, there will be found, probably, inserted a commentary on this speech not unlike the following, made on a similar occasion by his predecessor in the reign of Charles II.:—

"*March* 22, 1667.—The Duke of York, instead of being at sea as admiral, is now going from port to port, as he is this day at Harwich, and was the other day with the king at Sheerness, and hath ordered at Portsmouth how fortifications shall be made to oppose the enemy in case of invasion, which is to us a sad consideration, and shameful to the nation, especially for so many proud vaunts as we have made against the Dutch [French ?]."—*Pepys' Diary.*

‡ *Hansard*, clx. 25.

There is then a description of our large exports and imports, "our 10,000,000 quarters of corn imported annually, besides enormous quantities of coffee, sugar, tea, and of cotton, which is next in importance to corn for the support of the people"; followed by a picture of the consequences which would result from "such places as Liverpool, Bristol, Glasgow, and London, that is to say the Thames, being blockaded by a hostile force."

But not only is it assumed, that an enemy has landed, but that an army is menacing the metropolis itself, and the fortifications of the dockyards are described as the "means for the defence of London, because they will set free a large amount of force for the defence of the capital by operations in the field," for it is contended that, "if large forces are required to defend your dockyards, you cannot concentrate for the defence of London that amount of force which would be necessary to meet an invading army." And again—"The only defence for London is an army in the field; and any means which enable you to make that army as large as your military establishments will allow are directly subservient to the defence of the capital itself."* There is not one syllable to indicate that we had at that moment a fleet with 85,500 seamen, whilst, according to the authority of the Prime Minister himself, the French navy contained only 34,000 men.

It must, however, here be stated, that Lord Palmerston has a peculiar theory respecting the effect of steam navigation on our maritime strength, which he proceeds to develop. He contends, that as long as the movement of ships depended on the chances of the weather, "and as long as naval warfare was carried on by means of sailing ships, we were in a position, by our superior skill and aptitude for the sea and for naval combat, to rest upon the strength which we then had afloat."—And he proceeds to say:—

"The same difficulties which interposed in 1804-5 to prevent a large army drawn up on the opposite coast of the Channel from crossing over to this country, continued to exist; and, therefore successive Governments were justified in abstaining from any great effort for the purpose of artificial protection to

* *Hansard*, clx. 25, 26.

our dockyards and other vulnerable points. But the introduction of steam changed this state of things. The adoption of steam as a motive power afloat totally altered the character of naval warfare, and deprived us of much of the advantages of our insular position. Operations which, if not impossible, were at least extremely difficult while sailing vessels alone were employed, became comparatively easy the moment that steam was introduced; and, in fact, as I remember Sir Robert Peel stating, steam had bridged the Channel, and, for the purposes of aggression, had almost made this country cease to be an island."*

They who have sat for the last twenty years in the House of Commons, have observed throughout the successive debates on our National Defences, the constant reiteration of the opinion, on the part of the present Prime Minister, that the application of steam to navigation has supplied greater facilities for offence than defence; that it has, in fact, deprived us of our great bulwark, by throwing what he has repeatedly called a "steam bridge" over the Channel. It has been remarked, also, that many other speakers have adopted his view, at the same time, assigning to him the merit of its authorship. Thus, for instance, in the long debate on the Militia Bill of 1852, Mr. Walpole quoted this argument, as "so forcibly urged, on more than one occasion in the course of the debate, by the noble member for Tiverton" †; and Lord Lyndhurst urged the same view, with a similar acknowledgment of its origin.‡ It would, however, be difficult to adduce the testimony of one eminent authority in favour of this opinion, whilst a host of naval officers and others might be quoted on the other side. Two or three examples must suffice:—

Admiral Berkeley, a Lord of the Admiralty, in his evidence before the Committee on the Navy, in 1848, said, "I believe, myself, that the power which steam has given us, if we make use of it properly, is the best guarantee we have against invasion, if we choose to make use of our resources, and organise those resources in the best manner." §

Sir Thomas Hastings, President of the Commission for Coast

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* *Hansard*, clx. 18.

† *Hansard*, cxx. 1176.

‡ *Ante*, 72.

§ *Minutes of Evidence*, 3850.

Defences, under Sir Robert Peel's Government, in his evidence before the Ordnance Committee, of 1849, expressed the same opinion, and almost in the same terms.*

The opinion of Sir Charles Napier was thus expressed:—"With regard to the effect of steam, it had been said that it made blockading impossible; but, on the contrary, he believed that steam had, for the first time, made blockading effectual; for with a steam fleet it would be impossible for the ships blockaded to escape without the knowledge of the blockading squadron, as they had done in former times, when they landed in Ireland, and when the great portion of the fleet escaped from Brest unknown to those who were watching them."†

Captain Scobell, late member for Bath, whose utterances on Naval questions were characterised by a robust common sense, stated in the House that "he remembered being employed in blockading Boulogne, where the invading army of Napoleon was to have embarked, and his opinion was that this country was more vulnerable then than now, the agency of steam had done so much to strengthen it; for calms and fogs would have assisted the enemy much more then than now."‡

Sir Morton Peto thus gives expression to the scientific view of the question:—"We live in eventful times. The future of any nation will no longer be determined by its courage alone; science and its practical applications will decide our future battles; and surely this should not be a source of weakness, but of strength. We have unlimited supplies of iron and of coal; we have the best practical and scientific engineers. Our country has been the birth-place of the steam-engine itself. The rest of the world have copied us in its application to the thousand ways in which it has contributed to the advancement of civilisation and progress. It is a new thing that has happened to our country, that in naval affairs, instead of leading, we are taught by France and the rest of Europe."§

In a quotation given above, from Lord Palmerston's speech, there is a very curious error in attributing to Sir Robert Peel an opinion on this subject the very opposite of that which he

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* *Minutes of Evidence*, 5021.

† *Hansard*, clx. 545.

‡ *Hansard*, cxix. 1448.

§ *Hansard*, clxii. 437

entertained. It is a singular illustration of the fallibility of even the best of memories, that there should have been put into the mouth of that minister, in perfect good faith, no doubt, language, respecting a "steam bridge," which he emphatically repudiated, so long ago as 1845, when uttered by the very statesman who now assigned to him its authorship. The incident is so curious, that, for correct illustration, the quotations must be given textually, and in juxtaposition :—

Lord Palmerston (July 30, 1845.) "In reference to steam-navigation, what he said was, that the progress which had been made had converted the ordinary means of transport into a steam-bridge."*

Sir Robert Peel (same date in reply). "The noble lord (Lord Palmerston) appeared to retain the impression that our means of defence were rather abated by the discovery of steam-navigation. He was not at all prepared to admit that. He thought that the demonstration which we could make of our steam-navy was one which would surprise the world; and as the noble lord had spoken of steam-bridges, he would remind him that there were two parties who could play at making them."†

Lord Palmerston (July 23, 1860.) "And, in fact, as I remember Sir Robert Peel stating, steam had bridged the Channel, and for the purpose of aggression had almost made this country cease to be an island." ‡

The above citations, if they do not warrant the conclusion, that the theory of steam-navigation having rendered our shores more vulnerable to attack originated exclusively with the present Prime Minister, prove at least, beyond dispute, that in the costly application of that theory to this plan of fortifications, he has been acting in opposition to the recorded opinions of the most eminent statesman, and the highest professional and practical authorities of the age.

But to return to the speech before us. There is one striking resemblance between all the oratorical efforts on the invasion question, in their total omission of all allusion to the numerical

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* *Hansard*, lxxxii. 1233. † *Ibid.*

‡ *Hansard*, clx. 18.

strength of our own forces. If the reader will take the trouble to refer back to the speech delivered by the noble lord on the 30th July, 1845, when urging Sir Robert Peel's Government to an increase of our armaments, it will be found that our peril then arose from the existence in France of an army of "340,000 men, fully equipped, including a large force of cavalry and artillery; and, in addition to that, 1,000,000 of the National Guard."* The danger on the present occasion is owing to "an army of six hundred and odd thousand men, of whom four hundred and odd thousand are actually under arms, and the remainder are merely on furlough, and can be called into the ranks in a fortnight."† The million of National Guards of France had disappeared; but there is no allusion to the addition which we had in the mean time made to our own force of more than 200,000 volunteers and militia, besides the large increase of regulars.

But this characteristic omission will be more apparent in the case of the navies. In 1845, we were told that the French had a fleet in "commission and half commission" equal to that of this country. We are now informed, that "the utmost exertions have been made, and still are making, to create a navy very nearly equal to our own—a navy which cannot be required for purposes of defence for France, and which, therefore, we are justified in looking upon as a possible antagonist we may have to encounter—a navy which, under present arrangements, would give to our neighbours the means of transporting, within a few hours, a large and formidable number of troops to our coast."‡ To bring the statement, that the French Government had been, and still was, striving to create a navy very nearly equal to our own, once more to the test of figures, let us compare the increase which had taken place in the two navies in the interval between 1847, the last year of Louis Philippe's reign, and 1860, the year in which this speech was made. The comparison is limited to the men, because the definitive audit of the French accounts not being yet published for 1860, it will avoid all dispute to take the present number of

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* *Ante*, p. 6.

† *Hansard*, clx. 22.

‡ *Hansard*, clx. 23.

French seamen on the authority of the Prime Minister at 34,000,* although the French *Estimate* admits only 30,588.

Strength of the English and French Navies in Number of Seamen, in the Years 1847 *and* 1860.

	1847. No. of Men.	1860. No. of Men.	Increase.
English . .	44,969	85,500	English 40,531
French . .	32,169	34,000	French 1,831

It will be seen, by the above figures, that whilst England had increased her force 40,531 men, France had augmented hers only 1831. If the French estimate of the number of their seamen be correctly given, which has not been disproved by any statement of facts, then the force maintained by them is actually less in 1860 than it was in 1847. Nor must it be forgotten, that in proposing the Navy Estimates, the Secretary of the Admiralty had informed us a few months before that we had 456 steamers afloat to 244 French. It has been shown, too, that our dockyard expenditure for wages in 1859 was £1,582,112, whilst in France it amounted to £772,931, or less than one-half; and in proof that this activity in the Government yards had been unabated in 1860, it is only necessary to refer to the First Lord's statement on the 1st May, already quoted,† that during the preceding eight months more men had been employed in our dockyards than at any previous time, not even excepting the period of the great war with France which terminated in 1815.

It must here be mentioned, that this state of things led to the publication of a semi-official French pamphlet, in the summer of 1860, under the sanction of the Minister of State, with a view to expose the unprecedented and disproportionate increase of our navy, as compared with that of France. This pamphlet‡ contains a detailed comparison of the English and French naval expenditures, accompanied with elaborate statistics of their respective forces. The writer of these pages has, how-

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* *Hansard*, clxi. 1789. † *Ante*, p. 101.

‡ *The Navy Budgets of France and England.* By M. Cucheval Clarigny.

ever, preferred to rely exclusively upon official sources of information; namely, the definitively audited accounts of France, and our own parliamentary reports, and the statements of our official men.

Such were the comparative forces of the two countries, when the speech under consideration was delivered. Englishmen had a perfect right, if they saw in the act no derogation from the attitude of their fathers, who boasted of needing "no bulwarks, no towers along the steep," to ensconce themselves behind fortifications, in addition to a fleet of more than double the strength of that of France. It was purely a question of security and national honour, and in itself was not an aggressive measure towards other countries. It was made an act of offence towards France, solely by the speech which accompanied it, and which was an amplification of the invasion-speeches of 1845 and 1851. The objects of the invaders were now more minutely described; they were to make a sudden descent on our shores, to burn and destroy our naval arsenals, and this not with a view to conquest, for the speaker "dismissed from his mind the idea that any foreign power would dream of conquering this country with the view of permanent possession;" nor did he believe that an invasion would "ever be likely to be attended with permanent advantage to an enemy, except in so far as it might inflict injury on this country." The argument, in fact, assumed that we were in precisely the same state of insecurity as if our neighbours had been a barbarous tribe whose actions were inspired by mere love of vengeance and plunder, without any restraining forethought or calculation of consequences, and who afforded none of those hostages for peace which are to be found in the possession of great wealth, or extensive manufactures and commerce.

There was a tone of assumed defencelessness on our part pervading the whole speech, which found repeated utterance in such phrases as, "You cannot, you are not entited to rely upon the forbearance of a stronger neighbour," or, "For the sake of peace, it is desirable that we should not live upon forbearance, but that we should be able fully and effectually to defend ourselves." The speaker then assumes that a difficulty has arisen with some foreign power, and says, "With the utmost desire that such matters may be amicably adjusted; yet, if one country

is greatly the stronger, and another country greatly the weaker, it is very difficult for any arrangement to be made"; and then, that there may be no doubt which is the feebler party, it is assumed that, "the weaker power consists of a high-spirited and patriotic nation, with free institutions and with the popular feeling manifested on every occasion by means of a free press." Now, if such language had been addressed to a people whose shores were really in danger from a more powerful neighbour, this would have been a legitimate appeal to their patriotism, but when it emanated from the Prime Minister of a nation, whose ability to defend its coasts was double that of its neighbour to assail them, such an attitude was very similar to what, in individual life, would be represented by a man, in possession of both his hands, taunting and accusing another, possessing but one, with the design of assaulting him.

There was a remarkable contrast between the present speech, and those delivered by the same speaker in 1845 and 1851—a contrast all the more significant that he was now Prime Minister, whereas on former occasions he spoke only as an opposition member of parliament; namely, that it did not content itself with an abstract hypothesis of a possible invasion, but pointed to France as the menacing cause of actual danger. The cry of "Wolf!" had been so repeatedly heard for fifteen years, that it seemed as though it was necessary not only to name the wolf itself, but to depict the scowling aspect and crouching attitude of the beast of prey. The following passage leaves no doubt about the quarter from whence the attack was to be expected:—

"Now, Sir, as to the necessity for these works, I think it is impossible for any man to cast his eyes over the face of Europe, and to see and hear what is passing without being convinced that the future is not free from danger. It is difficult to say where the storm may burst; but the horizon is charged with clouds which betoken the possibility of a tempest. *The Committee of course knows, that, in the main, I am speaking of our immediate neighbours across the Channel, and there is no use in disguising it.*"*

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* *Hansard*, clx. 21.

To appreciate fully the scope and bearing of these words, it is necessary to refer to the precise circumstances under which they were spoken. The speech was delivered on the 23rd July, 1860. At that moment, the negociation of the details of the Commercial Treaty with France, upon the liberal arrangement of which depended the whole success of the measure, was at its most critical and important stage. The public mind was under considerable misapprehension respecting the progress of the measure, owing to the systematic misrepresentations which were promulgated in certain political circles, and by a portion of the press.* The British ministry alone knew that, up to that time, the French Government had manifested a disposition to carry out the details of the Treaty with even unexpected liberality, and they could not have been unaware how important it was, at such a juncture, to preserve a conciliatory tone towards that Government. It was, at this critical moment, that the speech burst upon the negociations in Paris. Had its object been to place the British Commissioners at the greatest possible disadvantage, it could not have more effectually accomplished the purpose. It cut the ground from under their feet, in so far as the French Government had been actuated by the political motives (apart from politico-economical considerations) of seeking to strengthen the friendly relations of the two countries as represented by their governments. This plea of high state-policy, with which the Emperor's government had met the complaints of the powerful interests which believed themselves compromised by the Treaty, was in a moment silenced and turned against itself. The offensive passages in the speech were instantly transferred to the pages of the protectionist organs, accompanied with loud expostulations addressed to their own government: "You are sacrificing us," they said, "in the hope of conciliating the political alliance of our ancient rival; and now, behold the reward you are receiving at the hands of the

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* In justice to the newspaper press, which almost universally took a hopeful view of the Treaty, and gave a generous support to the negociations, the notorious exception must be mentioned. The *Times* persisted in its attacks and misrepresentations, until silenced by the all but unanimous expression of opinion on the part of the manufacturing and commercial community in favour of the Treaty.

Prime Minister of England." These taunts resounded in the salons of the enlightened Minister of Commerce, and murmurs were heard even in the palace itself. A profound sensation was produced among all classes by this speech; and no other words could adequately express the emotions experienced by the French negociators, but astonishment and indignation. Had the Emperor seized the occasion for instantly suspending the negociations, he would have undoubtedly performed a most popular part; but on this, as on other occasions, his habitual calmness and self-mastery prevailed, and to these qualities must be mainly attributed the successful issue of the Treaty.

It is impossible to construct any theory of motives to account for this speech, consistent with a wise or serious statesmanship, and it probably met with the only appropriate commentary, in the following remarks which fell from Mr. Bernal Osborne:—

"At the commencement of the session, I gave my humble support to a Commercial Treaty with France, under the idea that I was promoting good and substantial relations with that country. The noble lord (Lord Palmerston) has told us that we should not speak of this Treaty with levity; but his actions are inconsistent with his words, for the resolution before us is the oddest sequel imaginable to a Commercial Treaty. After taking off all the duties on French manufactures, we are asked to vote nominally £9,000,000, though I believe it will ultimately be nearer £20,000,000, for the construction of defences to keep out our friends and customers. Why, Sir, if this was not an expensive amusement, it would be the most ludicrous proceeding ever proposed to a deliberative assembly." *

This project was voted by the House on the 2nd August, after a few hours' debate, in which scarcely any of the leading members spoke. Mr. Sidney Herbert, who took a prominent part in the discussion, declared that it was unwise in England "to leave a great temptation—to leave her vast property and her reputation at stake, and at the mercy of any nation which may choose to send an expedition in consequence of some diplomatic quarrel"; † —totally oblivious of the 456 Government steamers, the 85,500

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* *Hansard*, clx. 553.

† *Hansard*, ib. 506.

seamen, and upwards of 300,000 armed men, including volunteers, then ready to meet an invading enemy!* This was spoken ten days after the delivery of the Prime Minister's speech, which had, of course, produced its natural effect out of doors, and to which Mr. Herbert could thus triumphantly appeal, in replying to Mr. Bright:—

"Is it not a fact, I ask him, that the whole nation is full of alarm and suspicion? The people feel that they ought to obtain security at any price. We have, therefore, spent a large sum in putting our stores and munitions of war in order. We have an increase of the army—not a large increase, it is true, but still an increase. All these things are cheerfully borne by the people, and more is called for—more, perhaps, than the Government are willing to do. Is not that an indication that there must, in the minds of an immense majority of the people, be some cause for alarm? The country feels that it is not in a proper state of defence, and that, if we deal with the question at all, we should deal with the whole of it if we can. Such are the feelings which I believe animate the public out of doors."†

This is a fair illustration of the manner in which panics are created and sustained. A Government proposes a large expenditure for armaments, on the plea that France is making vast warlike preparations; and the public, being thereby impressed with a sense of impending danger, takes up the cry of alarm, when the Minister quotes the echo of his own voice as a justification of his policy, and a sufficient answer to all opponents. This mode of argument was thus commented upon on a subsequent occasion by Mr. Bright, when replying to another speaker:—

"But he knows perfectly well that what is called the country must necessarily take its opinions at second-hand. Manufacturers, farmers, professional men, shopkeepers, artisans, and

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* With a similar obliviousness of our own armaments, the Fortifications Bill was thus greeted by the Earl of Ellenborough in the Lords:—"I have, during the last thirteen years, endeavoured to draw the attention of this House and the country to the almost defenceless state of the realm, earnestly desiring that we should not remain unarmed in the midst of an armed world."—*Hansard*, clx. 1563.

† *Hansard*, clx. 502.

labourers do not con over these blue-books of ours, and read the accounts minutely given in the French votes. They know very little of this. They take their opinions from what is stated in this House and in the public press. And, of course, when there are men of the high position of the noble lord at the head of the Government and others associated with him, who have been in the service of the country for twenty, thirty, or forty years, it is only reasonable that the opinions which they express, and the statements which are made in their hearing, but which they do not take the trouble to contradict, should sink into the minds of the people, and become with them a fixed belief, although founded upon no knowledge whatever."*

This gigantic scheme of fortifications is without a parallel in any single project of the kind; and, judging by the analogy of Keyham and the Channel Islands, it may be predicted that, if allowed to go on, it will eventually involve an expenditure of double the amount of the original estimate. In the course of the debate Mr. Sidney Herbert stated that "it was chiefly on the advice of Sir Howard Douglas that the Government acted in making the proposition they now made."† Now it is known that this officer entertained to the last a faith in large wooden ships, and even believed that sailing line-of-battle ships would play a part in future naval wars. He could form no idea of Portsmouth, Plymouth, and the other dockyards, but that which was suggested by the past appearance of their harbours, crowded with wooden vessels, some in commission or half commission, some afloat in ordinary, and others in process of construction, with timber enough in store for two or three years' consumption, at the rate of thirty or forty thousand loads a-year. The scheme of fortifications approved by him might be very consistent with these views.

But if in accordance with the advice of Sir William Arm-

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* *Hansard*, clxi. 1785.

† *Hansard*, clx. 562. It is one of the evils of our day that men are often retained in the direction of great national undertakings long beyond the period of life when they are considered eligible for employment in conducting private concerns.—Sir Howard Douglas was, when consulted by the Government on this occasion, in his 83rd year; an age when men may be said to live only in the past, and to retain, for the affairs of this life, scarcely any interest in the future.

strong, Mr. Fairbairn, Sir Morton Peto, and other high authorities, on whose engineering skill the Government profess to rely, our ships of war are henceforth constructed entirely of iron (not wood cased in iron), and if they are built, as they will be if the country be wise, by contract in private yards, the "roots" of our navy will henceforth be on the Clyde, the Thames, the Mersey, and the Tyne, and not in Portsmouth or Plymouth. As for repairs, a vessel built wholly of iron four or five inches thick will, like an iron bridge, be practically indestructible. With railroads running from the interior into all our dockyards, perishable stores for the navy may be kept at the Tower, Weedon, or other inland depôts. It is, besides, notorious that great waste and abuse of various kinds arise from the unnecessarily large amount of these stores kept on hand.

With the revolution thus glanced at now going on in naval armaments, it is possible that when the grand scheme of fortifications for Portsmouth, extending to the South Downs, are complete, to prevent the "cradle of our navy from being burnt and destroyed," an enemy will find very few combustible materials in that arsenal except the coal. Our dockyards will then possess, comparatively, only a traditional importance, unless, indeed, we adopt the dishonouring theory that our fleets require fortified places in which to take refuge from an enemy.

The first proof to be offered by the Government, to whatever party it may belong, of the triumph of common sense in the conduct of our national affairs, will be the suspension of this panic-begotten scheme.

The speech of the Premier was calculated to give a renewed impulse to the agitation out of doors; but, owing to a cause which will be immediately explained, a reaction was taking place on the invasion question in the manufacturing districts, and the most exciting of the martial demonstrations which were witnessed during the ensuing autumn and winter occurred in obscure agricultural places.*

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* The following specimen will suffice to recall to the reader's recollection the scenes that were passing at the close of 1860:—

"Dinner to Major Watlington, M.P. for South Essex.—On Wednesday

During the negotiation of the details of the French commercial treaty, which extended over nearly the whole of 1860, deputations from our manufacturing districts, and from the metropolis, paid repeated visits to Paris, to afford information to the British Commissioners respecting their various productions. These intelligent capitalists returned to England impressed with the conviction that a great commercial revolution was being inaugurated in France; and this conviction found expression in the reports which the deputations made to their constituents. A natural revulsion from the state of panic followed. Reflecting men began to ask themselves if it could be possible that the most logical people were contemplating at the same time a policy of free trade and of unprovoked hostile aggression,—that the Emperor, whose great intelligence no one disputed, could really be aiming at pursuing, in his own person, the incompatible careers of the first Napoleon and Sir Robert Peel!

But the warning voice of the Prime Minister, which still rang in the public ear, coupled with the gigantic project of fortifications, made even intelligent men pause in their final judgment upon the designs of the ruler of France. This conflict of public opinion induced several members of parliament to institute a personal inquiry into the naval preparations of France. Mr. Dalglish, M.P., for Glasgow, who had served on

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afternoon, Major J. W. Perry Watlington, M.P., was entertained at dinner at Harlow Bush House by the members of the B troop of West Essex Yeomanry Cavalry, on his promotion from the rank of captain of the troop to the rank of major of the regiment. Major Watlington having thanked the company for the compliment paid him, and made some remarks regarding the character of the yeomanry cavalry and the volunteer rifle movement, proceeded to say, if this country was in danger it would be necessary to make preparation; but when such a man as Lord Palmerston, who had the command of all the resources of knowledge and information to enable him to know correctly the state of the pulse of the Emperor of the French, and tell rightly to what end each pulsation of that pulse tended, asked the House of Commons to grant millions for our defence in fortifications — when he pointed to the other side of the Channel, and held the Emperor of the French up as the bugbear, then it would be positive madness to doubt there was danger, and it would be culpable negligence not to be prepared for it. (Hear, hear.)"

a Commission * for inquiring into the management of the dockyards, visited France to examine the system of government accounts, and to inform himself as to the progress making in her naval armaments; and he took an opportunity of saying in the House, that, "having been to Toulon and Cherbourg, within the last fortnight, he could assure the hon. gentleman, the member for Norfolk, who appeared not to have got over the panic about a French invasion, that all his fears were groundless, so far as the preparations connected with shipbuilding, in those quarters were concerned." † Sir Morton Peto, who had been largely connected with industrial undertakings in that country, despatched an intelligent agent to report to him the state of its various dockyards. Every facility for these investigations was afforded by the French Government; and the result was invariably to disprove the statements of the alarmists, and to corroborate the accounts contained in the semi-official pamphlet of M. Cucheval Clarigny.

Mr. Lindsay, M.P. for Sunderland, also visited Paris, and sought an interview with the Minister of Marine, to obtain information respecting the actual state of the French navy, and he was so convinced, by the frank and unreserved explanations of that Minister, of the erroneous impression which prevailed in England, that he comunicated the information, in the first place, by letter, to Lord Clarence Paget, and afterwards to the House

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* This Commission reported as follows :—

The Royal Commission, appointed in 1860, to inquire into the management of the dockyards, report that the control and management of dockyards are inefficient from the following causes :—

1. The constitution of the Board of Admiralty.
2. The defective organisation of the subordinate departments.
3. The want of clear and well-defined responsibility.
4. The absence of any means, both now and in times past, of effectually checking expenditure, from the want of accurate accounts.

"The want of accurate accounts," seems to be a chronic malady at the Admiralty, if we may judge by the following penitent confession of the quaint Secretary, in the time of Charles II. :—

"*Nov.* 10, 1666.—The Parliament did fall foul of our accounts again yesterday : and we must arme to have them examined, which I am sorry for; it will bring great trouble to me, and shame to the office."—*Pepys' Diary.*

† *Hansard*, clxii. 465.

of Commons, soon after the opening of the session. It seems from the following extract from his speech, that the French Minister, imitating the example of his predecessor, M. Ducos, in 1853, invited our Secretary of the Admiralty (but in vain) to make a personal inspection of the French dockyards:—

"The Minister of Marine was anxious that the feeling of alarm in England on that subject should be got rid of. He said 'I have shown you everything; I have given you official documents; I will do more if you desire. Will you go and visit our dockyards and arsenals? I will send a gentleman with you, who will throw open everything to you, and you may see with your own eyes everything.' He (Mr. Lindsay) declined, saying he was tired of wandering about; but the statement which he had received, confirmed by these books, was so different from what was commonly believed, that he had sent the figures of the Minister of Marine, to his noble friend the Secretary of the Admiralty, and extended to him the invitation of the Minister of Marine to visit the French dockyards and arsenals. He had received a reply, in which the noble lord pleaded want of time and pressing engagements, but still seemed to entertain doubts as to the accuracy of the statements." *

On the 11th March, 1861, the Secretary of the Admiralty introduced the Navy Estimates for the ensuing year. He stated, "that in consequence of the termination of the China war, the number of seamen actually borne in the previous year, had not exceeded 81,100, being 4,400 less than the 85,500 voted; and he now asked for 78,200, which he considered to be only a reduction of 2,900 upon the force of the previous year. "But," he added, "the House would be glad to hear that there was a force of something like 25,000 reserves, available at a moment's notice if an emergency should make it necessary to man a large fleet."

With respect to ships, he proceeded, "We have expended during the present year, or, at least, shall have expended by the end of the month, no less than 80,000 loads of timber—more than double the ordinary rate of consumption," and he laid before the House the result in vessels: "We have built during

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* *Hansard*, clxi. 1147.

this year 9,075 tons of line-of-battle ships, 12,189 tons of frigates, 4,138 tons of corvettes, 6,367 tons of sloops, 1,409 tons of gun and despatch vessels, and 102 tons of gun-boats, making a total of 33,280 tons." He announced that for the ensuing year it was the intention of the Government to confine themselves to the construction of frigates and smaller vessels, adding, "I may further observe, that so far as large vessels are concerned, we are in a very satisfactory position." * At a subsequent stage of these naval discussions, he defined more clearly this position by a comparison with other countries, showing that we had seventeen more of these large ships (besides block-ships) than all the rest of the world—"We have," he said, "67 line-of-battle ships built or building. France has 37, Spain 3, Russia 9, and Italy 1, making 50." † The nine coast-guard block-ships have again passed entirely into oblivion!

Bearing in mind, that this prodigious increase in large wooden vessels had been going on after actual experiment had verified the success of iron-cased batteries in resisting combustible shells, it is really a waste almost unparalleled for recklessness and magnitude. It may be illustrated in private life, by the supposition that a large proprietor of stage-coaches doubled his stock of vehicles and horses at the very time when the locomotive and the railroad had entered into successful competition with the traffic of the turnpike-roads! A reaction against this policy now manifested itself in the very able opposition speeches delivered by Mr. Baxter, Mr. Lindsay, and Mr. Bright.

Lord Palmerston took a part in the debate. "The French," he said, "make no secret of their preparations; but when some well-intentioned gentleman asks them if they really mean to invade this country, if they really have any hostile intentions towards us, of course, they say 'Not the least in the world,' their feeling is one of perfect sympathy and friendship with us, and that all their preparations are for their own self-advancement." ‡ And, again, "Really, Sir, it is shutting one's eyes to notorious facts, to go on contending that the policy of France of which I certainly do not complain—has not for a great length of time

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* *Hansard*, clxi. 1747. † *Hansard*, clxii. 442.

‡ *Hansard*, clxi. 1791.

been to get up a navy which shall be equal, if not superior, to our own."*

For the last occasion let us bring this statement that the French had for a long time been trying to be our equals, if not superiors, at sea, to the test of figures—not French, but British figures. In this very debate, both Lord Palmerston and Lord Clarence Paget give the French naval force at 34,000 seamen, which shall be accepted as correct, though the French *estimate* is under 31,000. The Secretary of the Admiralty had, just before the Premier spoke, proposed a vote of 78,200 men for our navy for 1861. Now let the reader turn once more to the table in the first page, and he will seek in vain for any year, except 1859 and 1860, when the same noble lord was Prime Minister, when our force was double that of France, or even approached to such a disproportionate number. And it must be remembered, that the French consider that the reserve of 25,000 brings our force up to 100,000 men.

But, in order to test the statement, that France had been trying to get up a navy equal to our own by a comparison of ships as well as men, the following extract is given from the speech, delivered the same evening by the Secretary of the Admiralty :—

"He assumed that hon. gentlemen would accept the statement of the British navy he had laid before them as correct, and that showed that we had 53 screw line-of-battle ships afloat and 14 building and converting, making a total of 67. The French had 35 afloat and two building, making a total of 37. We had 31 screw and 9 paddle frigates afloat and 12 building, making a total of 52; the French had 21 screw and 18 paddle frigates afloat and 8 building, making a total of 47. He did not think that the discussion had extended to the smaller classes of steamships; but including them, the French had 266 vessels afloat and 61 building, making a total of 327; while we had 505 afloat and 57 building, making a total of 562."†

Now let us take, for comparison, the large ships; for our immense superiority in smaller vessels has been admitted from the first. The constant cry of alarm has been founded on the asser-

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* *Hansard*, clxi. 1788. † *Hansard*, ib. 1773

tion that France was attempting to rival us in ships of the line. The date at which we have now arrived, and when the speech from which the above extract is given was delivered, is the 11th March, 1861. It is here said, that France has thirty-seven line-of-battle ships built and building. On the 18th May, 1857, nearly four years previously, Sir Charles Wood, then First Lord, stated that France had forty liners built and building.* The same number is given for 1858 in the Report already quoted, presented to Parliament by Lord Derby's Government.† And on the 25th February, 1859, the country was startled by the statement of Sir John Pakington, that England and France were on an equality of twenty-nine‡ each "completed" ships of the line. What, then, has been the progress made by the French in nearly four years, during which we had the great invasion-speeches of Lord Lyndhurst, and Mr. Horsman, the almost incessant agitation of Sir Charles Napier, the rifle corps movement, the unparalleled expenditure in the dockyards, the gigantic fortification scheme, and all on the pretext that France was making great efforts to rival us at sea? Why,—it turns out, on the authority of our own Government, that France had fewer line-of-battle ships in 1861 than she was alleged to possess in 1857; she had forty built and building in 1857, and thirty-seven in 1861, or less by three;—the French Government, be it remembered, state officially their number to be only thirty-five. Our own liners, which were fifty in 1857, were now sixty-seven in 1861 (besides the block-ships), being an increase of seventeen. The number of French frigates is given at forty-seven in 1861, and they were stated by Sir John Pakington, in 1859, at forty-six§, being an increase of one only in two years. Our own frigates were put down at thirty-four in 1859,‖ and fifty-two in 1861, being an increase of eighteen.

It would be a waste of the reader's time and patience to offer any further evidence in a case which, having been subjected to so many tests, is at last demonstrated to be utterly groundless on the authority of British officials and our own public documents.

In the above quotation from Lord Palmerston's speech, the

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* *Ante*, 44. † *Parliamentary Paper*, 182 1859, p. 16.
‡ *Ante*, 55. § *Ante*, 56. ‖ Ibid.

allegation, that the French had for a long time been trying to equal or surpass us at sea, is accompanied with the remark, "of which I certainly do not complain." If such a design on the part of the French Government really did exist (which has been disproved), it would be a matter of grave concern, and even of complaint, to the tax-paying people of this country:—for with what legitimate or peaceful object could that Government be seeking to disturb the immemorial relations which England and France have borne to each other as maritime powers?

France possesses less than a fourth of our mercantile marine; she has not, perhaps, the hundredth part of our possessions to defend beyond the seas. She has more than double our military force; and whilst her land frontier gives her access to the Continent, and thereby to the whole world, we have no means of communication with any other country but by water. She has, therefore, no necessity for, and no legitimate pretensions to, an equality with us at sea; nor is there in her history any precedent for such a policy. If, under such circumstances, the present French ruler attempted for the first time to equal if not surpass us in naval armaments, the reasonable conclusion would be, that either he had some sinister purpose in view, or that he was a rash and unreflecting, and therefore a dangerous neighbour. If, after the offer of frank explanations on our part, with a view to avert so irrational a waste, that ruler persisted in his extraordinary preparations, there is no amount of expenditure which this country would not bear to maintain our due superiority at sea. But such a state of things would be accompanied with a sense of grievance; and it would make it quite inconsistent with all serious statesmanship to attempt to unite the two Governments in alliances for peace or war in other parts of the world, until the vital question respecting our own security at home had received a better solution than is offered by the maintenance of a war-establishment to protect us from an invasion by a so-called friend and ally.

The reaction which had taken place in intelligent minds against our injudicious naval armaments found expression in the House on the 11th April, 1861, when Mr. Lindsay, after an able speech, carried a resolution for putting an end to the further construction of large wooden vessels. The speech of Sir Morton Peto in support of this measure contains much

valuable advice for the guidance of Government in iron ship-building, and Sir Joseph Paxton and Mr. Dalglish spoke with practical force for the motion. Not one word could be said, in any quarter, in behalf of wooden ships of the line, and a pledge was extorted from Government that no more of these vessels should be built, and that those still on the stocks should remain unfinished, thus tacitly admitting that the immense fleet of line-of-battle ships now afloat were worse than useless, and that if they had not been built, under the excitement of the panic, they would not now have been ordered to be constructed. This might be inferred from the remark which fell from Captain Jervis. "The shell," said he, "now acted as a mine; it burst in passing through the side of the vessel, and would so shatter it that wooden line-of-battle ships would be nothing better than mere slaughter-houses."* In fact, it is doubted by intelligent naval authorities whether, in case of a war between two maritime powers, wooden ships of the line would be ever subjected to the fire of modern shell guns.

We now arrive at the last, and not the least, characteristic scene of the third panic.

On the 31st May, 1861, Sir John Pakington rose in the House, and addressing the Speaker said, "Sir, I now rise to call attention to a subject, the importance of which no one will deny. I have received information with respect to the French Government, in building armour-covered ships, to which I think it my duty to call the attention of the House and of her Majesty's Government without any loss of time." The right hon. gentleman then proceeded to say, that he was about to make his important statement on the authority of a British naval officer of high professional reputation, who, during the last three weeks had visited all the French ports and arsenals with the exception of Toulon; but he weakened the zest of the coming disclosure, by adding that Admiral Elliot did not wish to be under the suspicion of having acted as a spy:—"I should, therefore," said the speaker, "state that whatever information he has obtained was obtained in an open manner, and he visited the French dockyards with the advantage of having received the permission of the Minister of Marine. [Mr. Lindsay;

Hansard, clxii. 460.

hear, hear!] I understand the motive of that cheer, and it is only due to the French Government to state that on the part of the French Admiralty there has been nothing like any intention to conceal its preparations." There is a curious resemblance, in the tone of this speech, to that which was delivered in moving the Navy Estimates of 1859;—the same disavowal of the idea of alarming; the like absence of any exclusive information; and yet the apparent disposition to invest the whole proceeding with the character of a revelation. "I have no wish," he said, "to excite alarm by making this statement. I make it, because I think it my duty to communicate to the Government and the House, in this public manner, information of so startling a character."

The statement thus heralded was, that the French were preparing to build fifteen armour-plated ships, besides nine gun-boats, and floating batteries. There was not a word of information as to the precise stages in which these twenty-four vessels and batteries had been found; it was admitted that some (it was not said how many) "were only lately laid down." Lord Clarence Paget* spoke subsequently of nine having, during the last few months, been "laid down, or prepared to be laid down"; and, on the same occasion, Lord Palmerston† said the French Government were "beginning" to lay them down. No test of accuracy can be applied to the vague statements respecting those projected vessels. But the allusion to the *Magenta* and *Solferino*, two ships which everybody knew to be building as the companions to *La Gloire*, is more precise. "These two vessels," said the right hon. gentleman, "are to be launched the ensuing month, and to be added immediately to the strength of the French navy." At the time when these pages are going to press (March, 1862), these ships are still unfinished, and are expected to remain so for several months. Throwing aside all dependence on the wooden fleets, which the Admiralty had just completed, he proceeded, for the second time, to proclaim the danger of French maritime ascendancy:—

"Why are these preparations being made in France? I will not enter into the motives by which the French Government may be influenced in making such efforts. Every one is able to

* *Hansard*, clxiii., 425. † *Hansard*, ib., 535.

judge for himself for what ultimate end these preparations are intended. The point to which I invite attention is, that whatever may be the motive of France, the practical result is that we are rapidly becoming the second maritime power of Europe. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this statement. Is it true, or is it not true? If it be true, what are the intentions of the Government." *

Admiral Walcott confirmed the statement of the preceding speaker, and said, "he felt quite convinced that a neighbouring country was at that moment in command of a most formidable number of iron-cased ships." And Sir James Elphinstone, also a naval officer, followed in the same strain, declaring the report they had just heard "ought justly to alarm the Government and people of this country."

It is a curious feature in this discussion, that the alarm was chiefly confined to the naval officers, whilst those members who resisted, what Mr. Dalglish designated the "attempt that had been made by the right hon. member for Droitwich, to startle the country" represented precisely those constituencies whose interests would be the most compromised by the loss of the protection which our navy is designed to afford. Mr. Lindsay (Sunderland), Mr. Dalglish (Glasgow), and Mr. Baxter (Dundee), who had spoken previously, all represent important commercial sea-ports.

But to return to the question put by Sir John Pakington—"Why are these preparations being made in France"? There was not one of his audience so competent to answer this question as the right hon. gentleman himself: for when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, he laid on the table of the House, on the 4th April, 1859, that Report on "The Comparative State of the Navies of England and France," to which allusion has been so frequently made, drawn up by his own confidential officials for the special information of the Government, in which the following passage occurs, with reference to the future policy of the French Government:—

"It is stated that these iron-sided ships, of which two are more than half completed, will be substituted for line-of-battle ships; their timbers are of the scantling of a three decker;

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* *Hansard*, clxiii. 417.

they are to have thirty-six heavy guns, most of them rifled 50-pounders, which will throw an 80 lb. hollow percussion shot; they will be cased with iron; and *so convinced do naval men seem to be in France of the irresistible qualities of these ships, that they are of opinion that no more ships of the line will be laid down, and that in ten years that class of vessels will have become obsolete.*" *

With this document in his hand, the right hon. gentleman commenced, in 1859, with frantic haste, the reconstruction of our wooden navy, which was carried on still more frantically by his successor, notwithstanding that the Report of 1859 informed them that "no line-of-battle ship had been laid down since 1856, in France, and there had not been a single three-decker on the stocks since that year." † And now, on the 31st May, 1861, when, as Mr. Lindsay stated in the course of this debate, England possessed a greater number of efficient steam-ships of war than all Europe, and when the Secretary of the Navy, himself, admitted we had seventeen more line-of-battle ships than all the rest of the world (besides the nine block-ships), ‡ the House was startled with the declaration that we were rapidly becoming the second maritime power of Europe, because France had one iron-clad frigate (*La Gloire*) at sea, whilst our much more powerful ship, the *Warrior*, still wanted a few months for completion!

Now, let us see whether France had taken any clandestine or precipitate steps to justify her being teased and worried by such demonstrations as these: for it must not be supposed that the sensibilities of the French people are not wounded § by

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* *Parliamentary Paper*, No. 182—1859, p. 15. † Ibid, p. 19.

‡ *Hansard*, clxii. 442.

§ The following is extracted from an article on this subject in the *Journal des Débats*:—"Is there not something calculated to try the patience of a less excitable people than ours, to find ourselves constantly denounced as plotting an invasion of England—and denounced by whom? By those whom we have not invaded—by those who for three centuries have hired all the coalitions formed against us—by those who for three centuries have always marched in the front ranks of the invaders of our national territory. Is there nothing calculated to wound the just pride of a people, not wanting in self respect, to find ourselves incessantly called to account respecting our navy—and by whom? By those who maintain upwards of 80,000 men in active service, whilst our fleet does not contain more than 35,000—by those who are actually expending, on an average,

these imputations of sinister designs, reiterated by members of parliament who have filled the highest public offices. The value and efficiency of iron-cased vessels were proved (as will be seen immediately) to the knowledge of both England and France in 1854. England immediately possessed herself of double the number of iron-cased floating *batteries* built by France. The keel of the first *sea-going* frigate of this class, *La Gloire,* was laid down by the French Government in June, 1858. In the parliamentary report, dated January 6th, 1859, so frequently quoted, it is stated that this vessel is half completed. She made her first trial trip in August, 1860. *And she was the only completed iron-clad sea-going vessel possessed by France on the* 31*st May,* 1861, *when Sir John Pakington made his startling statement to the House, and when terrified admirals talked of her possessing a "most formidable number" of these ships.* There is certainly nothing in these facts to warrant the suspicion that our neighbours were endeavouring to steal a march on us in the construction of an iron fleet. Three years in the acquisition of only one sea-going iron-cased ship is surely a leisurely rate of progress, with which even our Admiralty might have kept pace!

As there has been a systematic, and to some extent a successful, effort made by the invasionists to keep alive the panic, by attributing to the French Government secret and extensive preparations of iron-clad vessels, it will be well, before concluding, to add a few words respecting the origin and progress of this innovation in ship-building.

More than fifteen years ago, when the mode of projecting combustible shells horizontally was adopted, it was foreseen that the nature of maritime warfare would be entirely changed. In his evidence before the Ordnance Committee, of 1849, Sir Thomas Hastings* said, that in consequence of the adoption of Paixhan's guns, in case of a naval action between two fleets, "instead of lasting ten hours, its duration will be nearer ten minutes." Here, then, was a clear necessity for some contrivance to meet this new danger: and the objects to be aimed at

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£12,000,000 sterling annually on their navy; whilst for several years we have been spending, on an average, 125,000,000f., or £5,000,000 sterling.'

* *Minutes,* 5023.

in clothing the ships' sides with iron armour, are very clearly defined in the following extract from a Lecture by Mr. Reed, formerly of Her Majesty's Dockyard, at Portsmouth, and now editor of the *Mechanics' Magazine* :—

"It is time that all those who concern themselves with this great question of how iron may best be rendered available for the defence of ships' sides, should recur to the circumstance which gave rise to it, and to the true end to be at present attained. That circumstance, undoubtedly, was the introduction of Paixhan's shells into naval warfare; and the end desired is the application of means by which the entrance of those terrible missiles through the side of a ship may be avoided. The attainment of this end would leave us subject only to the entrance of solid shot, to which all our ships were exposed during the wars in which we won our supremacy, and from which no practical system of iron-plating can at present be expected to save us. The attempt to build ships which shall be proof to solid shot—at least, to wrought-iron solid shot—is an altogether illusory one; and such ships are not urgently required. It is as a defence against shells, and hollow charged projectiles generally, and against these only, that iron plating can yet be made available. By applying iron of very great thickness, between wind and water, we may reduce the liability to injury by shot at that important part, and it may be well to do this; but if the upper works are made shell-proof, we can expect no more."—p. 21.

The first trial in actual combat of these destructive missiles was at Sinope, November 20th, 1853, when the Turkish squadron was attacked by a Russian fleet, and when "their whole force of fourteen ships was, to a great extent, silenced in a few minutes, and utterly crushed in little more than an hour." * The Russians were well supplied with shell guns, while the Turks had nothing more effective than 24-pounders. During the progress of the Crimean war, an opportunity was afforded to our fleet of experiencing the effects of shells in the attack on the forts of Sebastopol, when some of our vessels were severely injured; and when the whole affair, which was lost sight of in face of the more absorbing operations on shore, was viewed

* *Lecture*, by Mr. E. J. Reed, p. 13.

with even less satisfaction by our navy than by the public. It was during this war, too, that the first trial of iron-clad batteries was witnessed at Kinburn. Our own batteries arrived too late, but those of our allies reached the scene in time to take a part in the siege. And Sir James Elphinstone, a practical authority on naval subjects, said, "When the French batteries, which had fortunately arrived, got an opportunity of acting at Kinburn, they showed that an iron-cased ship was impregnable; yet, after that, we spent three or four years experimenting on iron plates, while we had much better have been employed in building iron ships. We had, perhaps, found out what description of iron would stand hammering the longest, but the great fact of the impregnability of iron ships had been proved at Kinburn."*

The invention of these iron-clad batteries has been attributed to the Emperor of the French. Mr. Scott Russell, however, tells us that the introduction of iron plates originated with Mr. Stevens, the great steam-boat builder, of New York, who was in this country ten years ago, and who then communicated to him the results of some experiments that had been made by the United States' Government with regard to these plates. And Mr. Reed, in his Lecture, quotes an article in the *Mechanics' Magazine*, published in 1824, in which the writer, whilst noticing a memoir on this subject by M. de Montgery, a Captain in the French navy, attributes the use of plates of iron or brass, for covering ships and battering rams, to Archimedes, upwards of two thousand years ago.

There is but little merit due, in any quarter, for the adoption of this very obvious and necessary reform in ship-building. Foreign governments might, indeed very naturally shrink from an innovation, which, by substituting iron for wood in the construction of vessels of war, would confer such an immense advantage on England;—for whilst in the purchase of timber, and the raw materials of sails and rigging for our navy, we were only on a footing of equality with France, and were placed at a disadvantage, as compared with Russia and America, where those materials were produced, no sooner does iron take the place of wood, and steam of sails, then it gives us

* *Hansard*, clxi. 201.

a natural advantage over the whole world. The British Government did not, however, seem to realize this view; for, instead of proceeding with the construction of iron-cased vessels for resisting combustible shells, for which purpose everybody admitted they were perfectly successful, successive Boards of Admiralty amused themselves for several years with the comparatively useless experiment of trying to penetrate an iron target a few inches thick with solid shot; and this, whilst the engineering and naval authorities were loudly proclaiming that it was for protection against combustion and explosion, rather than penetration, that the iron armour was required.* A volume might be compiled of the letters in the newspapers, the pamphlets, and the speeches, not omitting a series of Lectures by Captain Halsted, which have been published, to stimulate the tardy movements ot our Board of Admiralty.

In the meantime, the French Government have, for several years, professed not to lay down a vessel of war, intended for actual combat (as distinguished from *avisos*, transports, etc.), which is not designed to be clad in iron armour.

That portion of the naval expenditure of France, set apart for dockyard wages and materials for ship-building which was formerly laid out upon wooden vessels, will, therefore, henceforth be devoted to the construction of iron-cased ships: and it being the practice, as we have already seen, for the Minister of Marine to take a long prospective range in the publication of his plans, when we are told that fifteen or twenty iron-cased vessels are to be built, it is merely an announcement of what will be the future production of the French dockyards, spread over a series of years. Seeing that this is only a substitution of one class of ships for another, rendered necessary by the progress of science, in what respect can it be said to indicate hostility to us? Our government does not pretend to be in ignorance of the course France is pursuing, or of the motives which decide her policy. We choose to pursue another course.

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* At the late meeting of the Scientific Association, at Manchester, Mr. Scott Russell gave utterance to the opinion of nautical men, in a brief and pithy sentence: "The whole practical part," he said, "was incorporated in one expression of a great sailor, 'Whatever you do, for God's sake, keep out the shells.'"

Our Admiralty perseveres in building wooden line-of-battle ships, until compelled to desist by the House of Commons. Then "My Lords" throw all their energies into the construction of wooden vessels of a smaller size, having yet to learn that small wooden ships are as combustible as large ones. And then we are startled with the cry of alarm for the safety of our shores, because the French are said to be building more iron-clad vessels than ourselves! What can our neighbours do to put an end to these periodical scoldings, so trying to their national temper, and so lowering to our own dignity and self-respect? Nobody will expect the Minister of Marine to descend, with his eyes open, to the level of the wasteful mismanagement of our Board of Admiralty. His only hope of peace must, therefore, be in an improvement in our naval administration; and this is the view of the ablest writer in France on the state of the English and French navies, as expressed in the following extract from a private letter, written in consequence of the above incident in the House of Commons:—

"The great cause of the irritation, and of the disagreeable discussions which have taken place on this subject, I don't hesitate to say, is the ignorance, the incapacity, and the absolutely false organisation of the Board of Admiralty in England. Whatever increase of power the English may derive from it, I believe, in the end, it would be better for us to see something reasonable established in England, in place of that inactive, blind, wasteful, expensive machine, which is called the Admiralty, rather than to serve as the scape-goat, as we always do, when they discover that we, not having fallen into all the blunders that have been committed at Somerset House, have obtained results which displease British pride, and which serve as a pretext for railing at our ambition, when, in justice, John Bull ought to blame himself for his own short-comings."

"Rien n'est plus dangereux qu'un imprudent ami,
Mieux vaudroit un sage ennemi."

Before the close of the session, two incidents occurred which were calculated to impart renewed life to the panic during the recess. On the 19th July, Mr. Kinglake moved a resolution respecting a rumoured intention of the Piedmontese Government to cede the Island of Sardinia to France. Owing to the known views of the hon. member for Bridgewater, this motion would

have excited little interest, had it not derived substance and validity from the speech delivered on the occasion by Lord John Russell, the Foreign Secretary, who, whilst in possession of the disavowals of the governments concerned, contrived to leave the public mind in doubt and uncertainty, by weighing probabilities, speculating on possible dangers, uttering hypothetical threats, and advocating the maintenance of armaments, with a view even to "offensive" operations, in certain undefined contingencies. This speech, which found a subsequent echo out of doors, drew from Sir James Graham, afterwards, the remark that, "Whatever alarm has been created resulted from the speech of the noble lord the Foreign Secretary when the question of Sardinia was brought forward." *

On the 26th July, 1861, Lord Clarence Paget, Secretary of the Admiralty, moved for a vote of £250,000, in addition to the ordinary estimate, as the first instalment of an outlay which it was calculated would ultimately amount to £2,500,000, for building iron, and iron-cased vessels, and for supplying them with machinery.

This mode of bringing forward unexpected supplementary votes, on the plea that other nations were making sudden additions to their navies is admirably contrived for keeping alive a sense of uneasiness and panic. The present proceeding could only have been rendered necessary by the useless application of the estimates previously voted for the construction of wooden ships. On the 23rd May, a vote for £949,371 for timber had been carried by the Secretary of the Admiralty, in spite of the strenuous opposition of Mr. Lindsay, who described it as an unprecedented amount, and said that the sum voted the previous year had only been £722,758, and that for a long period of years, prior to 1859, the average amount did not exceed £350,000. This was, perhaps, the most extravagant proposition ever made by the Admiralty; for the year before the Secretary had declared that "it was the line-of-battle ships which required the large establishment of timber, for there never was any difficulty in finding timber for frigates, corvettes, and vessels of a smaller class." † The further construction of line-of-battle ships was now arrested; the success of the iron

* *Hansard*, clxiv. 1636. † *Hansard*, clvii. 2029.

ships had been established, and yet more timber than ever was wanted! Had one-half of the amount been applied to iron ship-building, there could have been no pretext for this startling supplementary estimate.

In the course of the exciting discussion which followed, Lord Palmerston said, "We know that France has now afloat six iron vessels of various sizes, two of them two-deckers, not frigates, all large vessels." And the Secretary of the Admiralty gave a list of nine iron-cased ships "afloat," including *La Gloire*. There is an inexactness in the word *afloat*, calculated to convey an erroneous impression. Iron ships are not launched with their armour on, but are cased in iron after they are afloat. This is a slow process. The keel of *La Gloire*, for instance, was laid down in June, 1858, she was floated in November, 1859, and made her first trial trip at sea, in August, 1860. She was the only completed sea-going iron-clad vessel at the time when this discussion took place. To give the name of iron ships to the floating hulls of wooden vessels (sometimes old ones), intended, at some future time, to be clad in armour, is obviously an inaccuracy of language, calculated to excite groundless suspicion and alarm.

It has already been shown that the French Government had abandoned the construction of wooden ships of war, and that in future all her vessels would be cased in iron. "We know," said Lord Palmerston, "that they have laid down lately the keels, and made preparations to complete, ten other iron vessels of considerable dimensions. The decision as to these vessels was taken as far back as December last, but was not carried into effect until May, because they were waiting to ascertain what were the qualities and the character of *La Gloire*, and other ships afloat." And, he added, "there is no illusion about them, for we know their names and the ports at which they are being built." * In the course of the debate Lord C. Paget gave a list of these vessels. All this proved the very opposite of concealment or suddenness of determination on the part of the French Government, and that they were pursuing precisely the same course with iron as they had done with wooden ships. It has been seen that in 1857, consequent on the report of the

* *Hansard*, clxiv. 1672, 1673.

Commission appointed in 1855, the French Government published a programme of their future naval constructions, with the nomenclature of all the vessels in their intended fleet, extending over a period of twelve years. The progress of science had rendered it necessary to substitute iron for wooden ships; and again the plans of the Minister of Marine are fixed for a series of years, and the whole world is acquainted with his plans. The marvel is at the ingenuity with which our statesmen could find anything in these proceedings with which to produce an evening's sensation in the House of Commons!

But the most remarkable incident in this debate remains to be noticed. Mr. Disraeli, on this, as on a former occasion, recommended an arrangement between the English and French Governments, for putting some limit to this naval rivalry, asking, "What is the use of diplomacy? What is the use of governments? What is the use of cordial understandings, if such things can take place"?* There is a vacant niche in the Temple of Fame, for the ruler or minister who shall be the first to grapple with this monster evil of the day. "Whatsoever nation," says Jeremy Bentham, "should get the start of the other, in making the proposal to reduce and fix the amount of its armed force would crown itself with everlasting honour."

On the 28th August, 1861, on the occasion of a mediæval holiday ceremonial, the Prime Minister stood on the heights of Dover, surrounded by a force of regular troops, sailors, and volunteers, when reviving the reminiscences of the projected invasion, from the opposite coast, more than half a century ago, he made an eloquent appeal to the volunteers of England, to improve and perpetuate their organisation. There was no one in the United Kingdom, or in Europe, who, in perusing his speech, doubted the Power to which allusion was made, when he said: "We accept with frankness the right hand of friendship wherever it is tendered to us. We do not distrust that proffered right hand because we see the left hand grasping the hilt of the sword. But when that left hand plainly does so grasp the hilt of the sword, it would be extreme folly in us to throw away our shield of defence."

In the last week of November, 1861, news reached England

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* *Hansard*, ib., 1679.

that Captain Wilks, of the American navy, falling into the error, not uncommon to men on land or sea, of constituting himself his own lawyer, had carried off four American citizens from the deck of a British vessel, in violation of international law. During the intervening period, between the arrival of this intelligence and the time when an explanation could be received from the government at Washington, that party which had for years been the promoters of the invasion panics sounded the tocsin of alarm at the prospect of a war with America. The circumstances of the case were certainly not favourable to the alarmists. The people of the United States were plunged in civil war, and the President, beleaguered at Washington, had demanded half a million of men to defend the Union against nearly as large a force of Confederates. The Federal Government had, therefore, every possible motive for wishing to avoid a rupture with England. To meet this objection, the alarmists had recourse to an expedient which had been employed in the case of the French invasion panic. A theory was invented, which the credulous were expected to accept for a fact. Nay, two or three theories were propounded which were in direct contradiction to each other. In the case of France, it was one day the Emperor, whose blind "destiny" was to hurl him on our shores; the next day, we were told that his wise and pacific policy would be overruled by the army and the populace.

In the case of America, we were asked, one day, to believe that Mr. Seward (who possesses no more power or responsibility, under the American Constitution, than one of President Lincoln's clerks) had a long cherished scheme for closing the war with the South, and turning it against Canada; the next day, we were informed that the government at Washington was disposed for peace, but that it would be overruled by the "mob." * These assumptions furnished the ground for warlike

* The writer, who has twice visited the United States at an interval of twenty-four years, and travelled through nearly the whole of the free States, never saw any mob there, except that which had been imported from Europe. In a few of the large cities, where foreign immigrants are very numerous, they constitute an embarrassment in the working of the municipal governments, owing to their inaptitude for the proper discharge of the duties of free citizens. But this foreign element exercises no sway over the policy of the Federal Government at Washington, or even of the separate State

prognostications, and for appeals to the combative passions of our people throughout the month of December. Meantime, it is more important to consider the course pursued by the British Government.

A despatch, courteously worded, dated November 30, 1861, was forwarded by the British Cabinet to Washington, expressing the belief that Captain Wilks had acted without the authority of his Government, and requiring the surrender of the captured envoys. It was calculated that an answer to this despatch could be received in about a month. It arrived, in fact, on the 9th January. It is to this interval of six weeks that the following statement of facts applies. On the 3rd December, three days after the date of the British despatch, the French Government forwarded a communication, through their minister at Washington, expressing their disapproval of the act of Captain Wilks, accompanied with the courteous intimation that all the neutral powers were interested in the disavowal of the proceeding on the part of the United States' Government. This despatch was formally communicated to the British Government on the 6th December. On the 19th December, Mr. Adams, the American Minister, waited on our Foreign Minister to say that, "no instructions were given to Captain Wilks to authorise him to act in the manner he had done. Neither had the United States' Government committed itself with regard to any decision upon the character of that act. The government would wait for any representation the British Government might make before coming to any positive decision." On the 18th December the Austrian, and on the 25th the Prussian Government sent despatches to Washington supporting the claim of the British Government. The Russian Ambassador, at London, wrote to his colleague at Washington, condemning the conduct of Captain Wilks, and this was confirmed by the Russian Government. These proceedings of the three great powers were immediately made known to the British Government.*

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legislatures. The United States, like England, is governed by landowners, with this difference, that they are numbered by thousands in one country, and by millions in the other.

* These extracts and dates are taken from the *Parliamentary Paper*, "North America, No. 3, 1862."

This was tantamount to the Arbitrators giving judgment in our favour before they were called on for their award; and as it was known to our Cabinet (but concealed from the public), that the President's Government had not authorised the act of Captain Wilks, the chances of war were removed almost beyond the bounds of possibility. There was thus every motive for waiting in calm confidence the reply from Washington. It was but a question of a month or six weeks. Even if the Congress of the United States, which alone can declare war, had, without debate, thrown down the gauntlet to Europe, a campaign, in the depth of winter, on the frontiers of Canada, is as impracticable as in the Gulf of Finland. So long as peace continued, the Convention between the two countries remained in force which prevented any addition being made to the armaments on the Lakes which separate the United States from Canada, until after six months' notice; and the highest military authority * has declared that the fate of a war in that region will depend on the superiority upon the Lakes.

All this, however, did not prevent our Government from employing the interval between the 30th November, and the 9th January, in hurrying forward preparations for war, as though an immediate rupture was all but inevitable. The country was startled by the instant appearance of a proclamation, prohibiting the exportation of the munitions of war. Expedition after expedition was despatched across the Atlantic. In three weeks, as we were afterwards informed by the Secretary of the Admiralty, from 10,000 to 11,000 troops were on their way to America, and our naval force on that station was nearly doubled.

These proceedings were trumpeted to the world, amid cries of exultation, by the organs of the invasion party, not one of whom seemed to occupy himself for a moment with the reflection that we were exposing our flank to an attack from that formidable neighbour against whose menacing attitude, even whilst extending the right hand of friendship, we had been so eloquently warned from the heights of Dover. This is the more remarkable, when we recollect that the Report of the Commission on Fortifications had completely laid bare all our

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* Duke of Wellington.

weak places, and, had drawn from Sir Charles Napier a cry of alarm:—"And what," he exclaimed, "were we to do while these fortifications were building? Would the French wait three years before they went to war, while we built our fortifications? * * * * The Commissioners ought to be brought to trial for high treason, seeing they pointed out to the Emperor of the French all the possible places at which he might land an army." *

The difficulty in which we found ourselves, when under the sudden necessity of providing warm clothing for our troops, brought the disposition of the French Emperor to a singular test. Such is the severity of the winter in Canada, that sentries are often required to be relieved every half hour to avoid being frozen, and there is frequently a fall of seven feet of snow during the season. For such a rigorous climate, a corresponding equipment of clothing was indispensable. Among other articles of necessity were long boots, in which we found ourselves deficient. The following little incident must be given in the words of Sir G. C. Lewis, the Secretary for War, delivered in the House of Commons, on the 17th February, 1862, and, as it is taken from the newspaper report of the speech, the expressions of feeling, as they were elicited from the House, are also retained:—

"There was one article that was not used by any of our regiments, and which was not in store in this country,—the article of long boots. The French Government having been informed of our difficulty, undertook the supply of 1,500 pairs of boots, which came over in forty-eight hours from Paris (cheers), and at a cost for which they could have scarcely been obtained from our contractors. (Hear, hear.) I am happy to mention this as a proof of the friendly action of the French Government (hear, hear)."

And thus ends the third panic!

It has been demonstrated in the preceding pages, by evidence drawn from our own official statements, totally irrespective of the French accounts, that as a nation we have borne false witness against our neighbours, — that without a shadow of

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* *Hansard*, clx. 545, 6.

proof or justification we have accused them, repeatedly, during a long series of years, of meditating an unprovoked attack on our shores, in violation of every principle of international law, and in contempt of all the obligations of morality and honour.

This accusation involves an impeachment of the intelligence, as well as the honour of France. In attributing to the government of that country the design of entering into a naval war with England, and especially in a clandestine or secret manner, we have placed them on a par, for intelligence, almost, with children. There is not a statesman in France that does not know, and admit, that, to provoke a contest with England, single-handed, for the supremacy of the seas, would be to embark in a hopeless struggle; and this, not so much owing to our superiority in government arsenals, where notorious mismanagement countervails our advantages, as to the vast and unrivalled resources we possess in private establishments for the construction of ships and steam-machinery.

In inquiring into the origin of these panics, it would be folly to conceal from ourselves that they have been sometimes promoted by those who have not themselves shared in the delusion. Personal rancour, professional objects, dynastic aims, the interests of party, and other motives, may have played their part. But successive governments have rendered themselves wholly responsible for the invasion panics, by making them the plea for repeated augmentations of our armaments. It is this which has impressed the public mind with a sense of danger, and which has drawn the youth of the middle class from civil pursuits to enrol themselves for military exercises—a movement not the less patriotic because it originated in groundless apprehensions.

If the people of this country would offer a practical atonement to France, and at the same time secure for themselves an honourable relief from the unnecessary burdens which their governments have imposed on them, they should initiate a frank proposal for opening negotiations between the two governments with the view of agreeing to some plan for limiting their naval armaments. This would, undoubtedly, be as acceptable to our neighbours as it would be beneficial to ourselves. It would tend to bring the attitude of the French Government into greater harmony with its new commercial policy, and thus save

them from a repetition of those taunts with which they were, with some logical force, assailed, a few weeks ago, by M. Pouyer-Quertier, the leader of the Protectionists in the *Corps Legislatif*:—

"If, indeed," said he, "in exchange for the benefits you have conceded to England, you had only established a firmer and more faithful alliance! Had you been only able to effect a saving in your military and naval expenditure! But see what is passing in England, where they are pushing forward, without measure, their armaments. * * * * Can we be said to be at peace while our coasts are surrounded with British gun-boats, and with iron-cased vessels? Are these the fruits of the alliance; these the results of that *entente cordiale* on which you calculated as the price of your concessions? Let the free-trade champions answer me. The Treaty has not only inflicted on us commercial losses, but its effects are felt in our budget as a financial disaster. The measures of the English Government compel you to increase your armaments, and thus deprive us of all hope of retrenchment."

It must be remembered, that such is the immense superiority of our navy at the present time, so greatly does it surpass that relative strength which it was formerly accustomed to bear in comparison with the navy of France, that it devolves on us, as a point of honour, to make the first proposal for an attempt to put a limit to this most irrational and costly rivalry of armaments.

Should such a step lead to a successful result, we must not be surprised if the parties who have been so long employed in promoting jealousy and discord between this country and France should seek for congenial occupation in envenoming our relations with America, or elsewhere. There is but one way of successfully dealing with these alarmists. Speaking in 1850, at the close of his career, the most cautious and sagacious of our statesmen said, "I believe, that, in time of peace, we must by our retrenchment, *consent to incur some risk.* I venture to say, that if you choose to have all the garrisons of all your colonial possessions in a complete state, and to have all your fortifications secure against attack, no amount of annual expenditure will be sufficient to accomplish your object."

If, hereafter, an attempt be made, on no better evidence than

that which has been subjected to analysis in the preceding pages, to induce us to arm and fortify ourselves against some other power, it is hoped that, remembering the enormous expense we have incurred to insure ourselves against imaginary dangers from France, we shall meet all such attempts to frighten us with the words of Sir Robert Peel, "We consent to incur some risk."*

Note.—It may perhaps be permitted to add a few words of explanation, of a personal nature. The writer took a part, both in the House and out of doors, in opposition to the first two panics, and to the expenditure to which it was attempted to make them subservient. At the dissolution, in the spring of 1857, consequent on the vote of the House against the China war, he was not returned to Parliament, but was elected for Rochdale during his absence in America, and took his seat on his return home, in June, 1859. In the following autumn, he went to France, and remained there, and in Algiers, till May, 1861. The only occasion on which he spoke in the House, during the interval between the spring of 1857 and the spring of 1861, was in opposition to Mr. Horsman's fortification motion, on the 31st July, 1859, when he gave expression, at some length, to many of the views contained in this pamphlet, and when he analysed the contents of the *Parliamentary Paper*, No. 182, 1859, to which reference has been so frequently made.

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* *Hansard*, cix. 766.

APPENDIX.

SINCE the preceding pages were written, the news of the single combat between the two American iron-clad vessels, the *Monitor* and the *Merrimac*, has reached this country, and has been followed by something like an attempt to create an *American* invasion panic. Again the cry has arisen from the old quarters for precipitate preparations, and again, as in the case of France, there is a disposition to forget all that we have already done. The United States' Government, being actually at war, have, we are told, determined to spend fifteen million dollars on armour-cased vessels. England, being at peace, had already incurred, or committed herself to, a much larger expenditure for the same purpose. As nearly the whole of the projected outlay in America is for gun-boats, or coast batteries, and not for vessels adapted for crossing the Atlantic, there is nothing in their preparations that is menacing to Europe; and we may, therefore, wait in safety whilst the Americans are subjecting to the test of actual warfare the rival powers of artillery and iron shields. Under the intense stimulus now imparted to the mechanical genius of that inventive people, every month will probably witness the production of some new contrivance for aggression or defence; and should the civil war unhappily continue, it may, not improbably, lead to discoveries which will supersede existing armaments altogether.

Meantime, the experience which we have already gained from this deplorable contest has proved that our existing wooden fleet is worse than useless,—that it is absolutely dangerous. When, in the pursuits of private industry, a manufacturing capitalist discovers that his machinery has been superseded by new inventions, and that he can only continue to work it at a serious loss, he does not hesitate at once to throw it aside, however cautious he may be in making choice of a new investment to replace it. Precisely the same principle is applicable to nations.

The following Memorandum, which was forwarded to the Prime Minister in October last, will be, probably, in some

quarters, considered to have acquired increased force from the late American news.

MEMORANDUM.

"The present peculiar and exceptional state of the English and French navies, the result of scientific progress in maritime armaments, offers an opportunity for a reciprocal arrangement between the two governments of the highest interest to both countries.

"During the last century, and down almost to the present day, the relative naval strength of the two countries has been measured by the number of their line-of-battle ships. But, owing to the recent improvements in explosive shells, and other combustible missiles, and in the modes of projecting them, these large vessels have been pronounced, by competent judges, no longer suited for maritime warfare, and warning voices have even proclaimed that they will henceforth prove only a snare to those who employ them.

"This opinion has found utterance in several emphatic phrases.

"'Wooden ships-of-the-line,' says one, 'will, in a future naval war, be nothing but human slaughter-houses.' 'They will be blown to lucifer matches,' says another. A third authority tells us, that in case of a collision between two such vessels, at close quarters, the only words of command for which there will be time will be, 'Fire, and lower your boats!' Whilst a fourth declares that 'any government that should send such a vessel into action against an iron-plated ship would deserve to be impeached.'

"It hardly required such a weight of evidence to convince us, that to crowd nearly a thousand men upon a huge wooden target, with thirty or forty tons of gunpowder at their feet, and expose them to a bombardment with detonating shells and other combustible projectiles, must be a very suicidal proceeding.

"The governments of the great maritime states have shown that they share this opinion by abandoning the construction of line-of-battle ships.

"America, several years since, gave the preference to long low vessels, possessing the utmost possib e speed, and being capable of carrying the largest guns.

"France was the next to cease building ships of the line.

"The British Government have come to the same decision, and they gave a pledge last session, with the approval of Parliament, that they would not complete the vessels of this class which were unfinished on the stocks.

"It is under these circumstances, that the two countries find themselves in possession of about one hundred wooden ships of the line with screw propellers. England has between sixty and seventy, and France between thirty and forty of these vessels, the greater part of them in commission; and their maintenance constitutes one of the principal items in the naval expenditure of the two countries.

"It will be admitted that, if these vessels did not exist they would not now be constructed, and that when worn out they will not be renewed. It is equally indisputable, that they have been built by the two governments with a view to preserve a certain relative force towards each other.

"In proof that this rivalry has been confined exclusively to England and France, it may be stated, on the authority of the official representative of the Admiralty in the House of Commons, that Spain has only three, Russia nine, and Italy one, of this class of ships. America has only one.

"These circumstances suggest, as an obvious course, to the two governments, that they should endeavour to come to an amicable agreement by which the greater portion of these ships might be withdrawn and so disposed of as to be rendered incapable of being again employed for warlike purposes. This might be effected by an arrangement which should preserve to each country precisely the same relative force after the reduction as before. For instance, assuming, merely for the sake of argument, England to possess sixty-five, and France thirty-five, then for every seven withdrawn by France, England should withdraw thirteen; and, thus, to whatever extent the reduction was carried, provided this proportion were preserved, the two countries would still possess the same relative force. The first point on which an understanding should be come to is as to the number of ships of the line actually possessed by each—a very simple question, inasmuch as it is not complicated with the comparison of vessels in different stages of construction. Then, the other main point is to agree upon a plan for making a fair selection, ship for ship, so that the withdrawals on both sides may be as nearly as possible of corresponding size or value. If the principle of a proportionate reduction be agreed to, far fewer difficulties will be found in carrying out the details than must have been encountered in arranging the plans of co-operation in the Crimean and Chinese wars, or in settling the details of the Commercial Treaty.

"And is this principle of reciprocity, in adjusting the naval forces of the two countries, an innovation? On the contrary, it would be easy to cite the declarations of the leading statesmen on both sides of the Channel, during the last twenty years, to prove that they have always been in the habit of regu-

lating the amount of their navies by a reference to each other's armaments. True, this has been invariably done to justify an increase of expenditure. But why should not the same principle be also available in the interest of economy, and for the benefit of the taxpayers? A nation suffers no greater loss of dignity from surrendering its independence of action in regulating its armaments, whether the object be to meet a diminution or an increase of its neighbours' forces.

"Although this reduction of the obsolete ships of the line presents a case of the easiest solution, and should, therefore, in the first place, be treated as a separate measure, it could hardly fail to pave the way for an amicable arrangement for putting some limit to those new armaments which are springing out of the present transition state of the two navies.

"The application of iron plates to ship-building, which has rendered the reconstruction of the navies necessary, must be regarded as the commencement of an indefinite series of changes; and, looking to the great variety of experiments now making, both in ships and artillery, and to the new projects which inventors are almost daily forcing upon the attention of the governments, it is not improbable that, a few years hence, when England and France shall have renewed their naval armaments, they will again be rendered obsolete by new scientific discoveries.

"In the mean time, neither country adds to its relative strength by this waste of national wealth; for, as both governments aim at only a proportionate increase, it is not contemplated that either should derive exclusive advantage from the augmentation. An escape from this dilemma is not to be sought in the attempt to arrest the march of improvement, or to discourage the efforts of inventive genius; a remedy for the evil can only be found in a more frank understanding between the two governments. If they will discard the old and utterly futile theory of secrecy,—a theory on which an individual manufacturer or merchant no longer founds his hopes of successful competition with a foreign rival,—they may be enabled, by the timely exchange of explanations and assurances, to prevent what ought to be restricted to mere experimental trials from growing into formidable preparations for war. If those who are responsible for the naval administration of the two countries were consulted, it would probably be found that they are appalled at the prospect of a rivalry, which, whilst it can satisfy neither the reason nor the ambition of either party, offers a boundless field of expenditure to both.

"Nor should it be forgotten that the financial pressure, caused by these rival armaments, is a source of constant irritation to the populations of the two countries. The British taxpayers

believe, on the authority of their leading statesmen, that the increased burden to which they are subjected is caused by the armaments on the other side of the Channel. The people of France are also taught to feel similarly aggrieved towards England. The feelings of mutual animosity, produced by this sacrifice of substantial interests, are not to be allayed by the exchange of occasional acts of friendship between the two *governments*. On the contrary, this inconsistent policy, in incessantly arming against each other at home, whilst uniting for common objects abroad, if it do not impair public confidence in their sincerity, tends at least to destroy all faith in an identity of interests between the rulers and the ruled, by showing how little advantage the peoples derive from the friendship of their governments.

"But the greatest evil connected with these rival armaments is, that they destroy the strongest motives for peace. When two great neighbouring nations find themselves permanently subjected to a war expenditure, without the compensation of its usual excitements and honours, the danger to be apprehended is that, if an accident should occur to inflame their hostile passions—and we know how certain these accidents are at intervals to arise—their latent sense of suffering and injury may reconcile them to a rupture, as the only eventual escape from an otherwise perpetual war taxation in a time of peace.

"Circumstances appeal strongly to the two governments at the present juncture, in favour of a measure of wise and safe economy. In consequence of the deplorable events in America, and the partial failure of the harvests of Europe, the commerce and manufactures of both countries are exposed to an ordeal of great suffering. Were the proposed naval reduction carried into effect, it would ameliorate the financial position of the governments, and afford the means for alleviating the fiscal burdens of the peoples. But the moral effect of such a measure would be still more important. It should be remembered that although these large vessels have lost their value in the eyes of professional men, they preserve their traditional terrors for the world at large; and when they move about, in fleets, on neighbouring coasts, they excite apprehension in the public mind, and even check the spirit of commercial enterprise. Were such an amicable arrangement as has been suggested accomplished, it would be everywhere accepted as a pledge of peace, and, by inspiring confidence in the future, would help to reanimate the hopes of the great centres of trade and industry, not only in France and England, but throughout Europe.

"Will not the two governments, then, embrace this opportunity of giving effect to a policy, which, whilst involving no risk, or sacrifice of honour, or diminution of relative power, will

tend to promote the present prosperity and future harmony of the two countries, and offer an example of wisdom and moderation, worthy of this civilised age, and honourable to the fame of the two foremost nations of the earth?"

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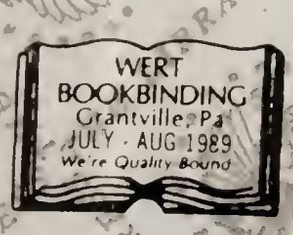

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